

MediaMOO Symposium: The Ethics of Research in Virtual Communities

January 20th, 1997

On January 20th, 1997, as part of MediaMOO's fourth birthday celebration, a symposium was held to discuss ethical issues raised by doing research in virtual communities. For those who could not attend, a log was kept and is presented here.

MOO discussions are more like brainstorming sessions than organized debates. You'll find here an interesting collection of observations and questions, with no particular structure among them. Most ideas are not followed up. It's hoped that the issues raised can be discussed in more detail on the "research list on MediaMOO, and elsewhere.

Announcement

Here's the original announcement for the event:

The Ethics of Research in Virtual Communities

An Online Symposium
in honor of MediaMOO's Fourth Birthday

Monday, January 20th
Symposium: 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM ET
Followed by
The Fourth MediaMOO Anniversary Ball: 4:30 - 6:00 PM ET

To connect to MediaMOO:
telnet [mediamoo.media.mit.edu](telnet://mediamoo.media.mit.edu) 8888
Or see <http://www.media.mit.edu/~asb/MediaMOO/>

THE SYMPOSIUM

Electronic communications media pose new ethical dilemmas for researchers. Can a post from a mailing list be quoted without permission? Should the character names of participants in a MUD be changed before publication? Under what circumstances does the researcher need to announce his or her presence to the community? Is logging a conversation in a chat room more like overhearing something in the park, or going to someone's home with a concealed tape recorder? To complicate matters, the answers to these sorts of questions are often contingent on the profession of the researcher—anthropologists, journalists, and political scientists are all subject to different professional ethics standards. It's no wonder that participants in such communities lack shared expectations about when they can expect privacy and when they are subject to observation. In this online discussion, attendees will discuss these issues, and evaluate several proposed statements of professional ethics for research online.

FEATURED PANELISTS (in alphabetical order):

Amy Bruckman is a doctoral candidate at the Media Lab at MIT, where she does research on virtual communities. She is the founder of MediaMOO (a text-based virtual reality environment or "MUD" designed to be a professional community for media researchers), and MOOSE Crossing (A MUD designed to be a constructionist learning environment for kids.) MOOSE Crossing includes a new programming language, MOOSE, designed to make it easier for kids to learn to program. Amy received her master's degree from the Media Lab's Interactive Cinema Group in 1991, and her bachelors in physics from Harvard University in 1987. More information about her work is available at <http://www.media.mit.edu/~asb/>

Lynn Cherny is a researcher at AT&T Labs-Research studying electronic communities. She has an M.Phil. from Cambridge University in Computer Speech and Language Processing and a Ph.D. from Stanford in Linguistics. Her dissertation, forthcoming from CSLI Publications, was an ethnolinguistic study of conversation and community in a social MOO. She is the co-editor (with Elizabeth Reba Weise) of *Wired Women: Gender and New Realities in Cyberspace*, a collection of essays about gender and women's experiences in different Internet communities (Seal Press, 1996). More of her work can be found at <http://akpublic.research.att.com/~cherny/>.

David Jacobson is a professor of social anthropology at Brandeis University with an interest in virtual ethnography. He is the author of *Reading Ethnography* (and other books about urban Africans and nuclear espionage) and, more recently, a paper about mooring, "Contexts and Cues in Cyberspace."

Lee-Ellen Marvin is a graduate student in Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania. She brings to her studies of narrative and creative speech events, many years of experience as a professional storyteller and radio producer. She's published one study of MOO culture, available on-line at: <http://shum.huji.ac.il/jcmc/voll/issue2/marvin.html>, and is working on a second paper to be presented at the Western Communication Conference in February of this year.

Malcolm (Mac) Parks is Associate Professor of Speech Communication at the University of Washington. His primary research line is concerned with the development of personal relationships and social networks. His recent work on relationships in computer-mediated settings includes a study of relationships formed through Usenet newsgroups and an on-going study of relationships development in MOOs.

... and other members of the MediaMOO community.

Please join us after the symposium for the annual MediaMOO Anniversary Ball!

ABOUT MEDIAMO

MediaMOO is a MUD designed to be a professional community for media researchers. MediaMOO first opened to the public with The MediaMOO Inaugural Ball on January 20th, 1993. New members are welcome. More information is available at <http://www.media.mit.edu/~asb/MediaMOO/>

Log

Here's what took place:

**** Welcome to MediaMOO! ****

PLEASE NOTE:

MediaMOO is a professional community, where people come to explore the future of media technology.

The operators of MediaMOO have provided the materials for the buildings of this community, but are not responsible for what is said or done in them. In particular, you must assume responsibility if you permit minors or others to access MediaMOO through your facilities. The statements and viewpoints expressed here are not necessarily those of the janitors, Amy Bruckman, or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and those parties disclaim any responsibility for them.

A note to guests: guests' connection site information is publicly readable, and included on all mail messages posted.

Type:

'connect' to connect to your character,
'connect Guest' to connect to a guest character,
'help @request' for information on how to get your own character,
'@who' just to see who's logged in right now,
'@quit' to disconnect, either now or later.

>@go summer

Summer Conference Room

A warm, sunny room with a table and plenty of chairs. Outside, the trees along Memorial Drive are a verdant green and pleasure boats are skittering across the Charles River. A warm breeze enters through an open window.

Obvious exits: out to STS Centre 2nd Level Hall

Diane, Luna, Kristina, and LurkingHorror are standing here.

You see Plaque Showing How to Use This Room and A sign which reads... Important forum information.

Type- READ SIGN here.

>read sign

Thanks for coming to today's forum on the ethics of research in virtual communities!

FORUM SUBMISSIONS

A number of people have submitted statements for discussion at today's forum.

They are postings 214, 215, and 216 on the *research mailing list. To read them, type:

@peek 214-216 on *research

CONVERSATION SCOPE

The purpose of today's conversation is to extend our shared understanding

of abstract principles about the ethics of doing research in virtual communities. While specific cases are useful in understanding the broader issues, some of the discussions in preparation for this event have degenerated into unproductive flaming. Please try to focus your comments on abstract principles, and avoid accusations targetted at individuals. Accusations of individuals are welcome on the *hardcopy mailing list. Please be especially careful in raising any topic in which you have a vested interest. Please avoid commenting on works which you have not read. In the interest of maintaining a productive conversation, the moderator (Amy) will first warn and then eject anyone who in her judgement is being disruptive.

LOGGING

The forum conversation will be logged, and the log will be posted on MediaMOO's web page. Individuals' comments from the forum may be quoted without names being changed.

Please join us for the annual MediaMOO birthday costume ball after the forum!

To get there, type:

@go ballroom foyer

Enjoy!

(You finish reading.)

>@peek 214-216 on *research

Message 214 on *Research (#6271):

Date: MonJan20 12:04:31 1997 EST

From: Amy (#75)

To: *Research (#6271)

Subject: Forum submission from Coyote

Coyote offers this contribution for today's discussion:

As a remaining panel member for Monday's symposium, I would like to list a number of issues that I hope will not have been lost in the recent circus on this list. I offer them as a potential frame for Monday's discussion.

First, a couple of quick prefacing remarks. I believe we should be careful about granting too much leeway for the disciplinary differences in ethics some people claim. Part of the problem is that on-line settings attract a wide variety of commentators— many of whom have never been trained in research. Even so, the basic ethical obligations to research participants are the same whether you're a psychologist doing a survey or an English major writing about Tinysex with your friends on Elsemoo. While different disciplines may use different methodologies, the ethical obligations are the same. In the U.S., and I suspect elsewhere, they are the same because national law and institutional policies say they are.

*

We originally organized the panel with the idea of discussing the challenges on-line settings posed for the basic ethical obligations to participants. What are these basic obligations? Typically, researchers note five:

1. Voluntary participation and informed consent.

2. Freedom from harm.
3. Anonymity and confidentiality
4. Honesty and the avoidance of unjustified deception.
5. Privacy in thought and action.

*

Most of these issues have straightforward application to the world of MOOs and other on-line settings. So, on- or off-line it would be unethical, for example, to not inform people that you were recording their private comments. It would be unethical to lie about the nature of your research or to misrepresent your credentials. For example, Most of these issues have straightforward application to the world of MOOs and other on-line settings. So, on- or off-line it would be unethical, for example, to not inform people that you were recording their private comments. It would be unethical to lie about the nature of your research or to misrepresent your credentials. For example, it would clearly be unethical to quote comments made in conversations you'd logged without permission or had logged with permission but had not explicitly identified as being for a specific study. It would be unethical to reveal the true identities of your respondents.

*

The difficult stuff, and the stuff I hope we'll focus on, comes at the next level. I won't try to make a complete list, but here are some of the questions that have been raised. What constitutes informed consent in an observational or survey study on-line where there is no actual signature on a form? Where do we draw the line between public settings and private settings? This is a critical issue because the ethics of recording behavior in the two settings are quite different. Are MOOs and public rooms on MOOs, for instance, public? How are we to treat the on-line identities of people? As real names and identities? If so, what protections are they granted when they are in areas of MOOs that are defined as public? Are there kinds of data that researchers should generally avoid (e.g., observations of Tinysex, log files or other materials forwarded by third parties)? How do we weigh concepts of harm in virtual settings? Do we apply the same standards to what is essentially talk-describing-behavior that we do to actual behavior?

Again, I offer these questions only as a starting point— an effort to summarize some of the issues that those of us in the professional research communities have been facing. There are others. Add them. May we have a truly productive discussion.

—Coyote aka Malcolm (Mac) Parks, University of Washington.

Message 215 on * Research (#6271):
Date: Mon Jan 20 12:08:18 1997 EST
From: Amy (#75)

To: *Research(#6271)
Subject: Forum submission from Lynne

Lynne offers this contribution for today's discussion:

WORKING TOWARDS A RANGE OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOURS RATHER THAN ETHICAL ABSOLUTES.

The discussion on *research leading up to this symposium has been informative in learning more about the ethical codes of various disciplines. However, it leaves me with the impression that it is somewhat futile to expect researchers from a wide range of disciplines to agree upon or adhere to the same ethical guidelines when conducting research in virtual environment.

Rather than trying to establish a definitive set of ethical guidelines for research in virtual communities, I propose we

- 1). Identify the common ground in ethical codes from the range of disciplines represented. As a starting point, the American Psychological Association (APA) bases its ethical code on the principles of competence, integrity, professional and scientific responsibility, respect for people's rights and dignity, concern for others' welfare, and social responsibility (full details at <http://www.apa.org:80/ethics/code.html>). Other ethical codes seem to be based on similar principles, even if the interpretation and application of these principles vary.
- 2). Compile a list of ethical issues/dilemmas specific to virtual environments. For each issue, ethical approaches/perspectives from a range of disciplines could be articulated.
- 3). Seek experienced virtual researchers from a range of disciplines who are prepared to act as a contact point for new researchers, ethics review boards and professional associations to discuss the ethics of proposed virtual research.
- 4). Disseminate the outcomes of 1) to 3) above as widely as possible. This may include publishing a Virtual Ethics web page, sending copies to IRBs, professional associations, MOOs, and other virtual environments.

Lynne Roberts
MediaMOOname: Lynne

Message 216 on * Research (#6271):
Date: Mon Jan 20 12:19:19 1997 EST
From: Amy (#75)
To: *Research (#6271)
Subject: Forum submission from Amy

This forum submission is from me:

Electronic communications media present new ethical challenges for researchers. Do you need permission to quote a posting from a mailing list? Should postings to USENET be treated any differently from those to a mailing list? Do you need permission to quote a log of a conversation overheard in a

public room in a MUD? Should you change the real names of people quoted on a mailing list, MUD, or chat room? Should you change people's online pseudonyms? The answer to many of these questions is: it depends on your profession. The professional ethics of a journalist are very different from those of an anthropologist or a political scientist. Your conduct must satisfy the standards of the community of researchers of which you are a member. What follows is not a list of solutions to ethical dilemmas, but guidelines for how to arrive at such solutions.

1. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR YOUR DISCIPLINE(S)

To understand the ethical obligations of any research situation, a researcher must first familiarize him or herself with the code of ethics developed for his/her profession. While these may not explicitly account for significant features of electronic media, an existing code of professional ethics is an essential starting point. Much can be understood by extrapolation from existing codes.

If you do not have a strong disciplinary affiliation, pick one—or pick several, and blend them. The most egregious violations of ethical research standards are typically perpetrated by amateurs who have not familiarized themselves with the professional ethics of any field.

2. UNDERSTAND ONLINE SITUATIONS BY ANALOGY TO TRADITIONAL ONES

Most online situations can be understood by analogy to face to face ones. Consider the question: may a journalist listen to a conversation in a public room on a MUD, keep a log, and quote from it in an article? Most such meetings are rather like participating in a conversation in a cafe. (A few rare cases are more like a public town meeting—but these are the exception.) If you were in a cafe, would you record the conversation on tape without asking permission of all present? Keeping a log is like recording something on tape. If you were studying people's behavior in a cafe, would you feel obliged to tell those present that you are a journalist/anthropologist/etc? Appropriate analogies to real world situations can help find answers to most ethical dilemmas.

Keep in mind that interaction with people mediated by electronic communications media is not fundamentally different from face to face interaction. Your ethical responsibilities are to your subjects, and to the broader society. Pretending the mediating technology isn't there can often help clarify your thinking on an ethical dilemma.

3. CONSIDER THE SUBJECTS' REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

3a. WHERE EXPECTATIONS ARE LACKING, WORK TO ESTABLISH THEM

In most traditional situations, people have expectations of whether they might be quoted. Someone standing up at a town meeting has a reasonable expectation that their comments are public and quotable. Someone chatting with friends in a cafe has a reasonable expectation of privacy (unless they're a public figure.) Someone publishing a paper should expect (in fact hope) to be quoted. But what about someone posting to a mailing list? In online situations, those expectations are often lacking.

If your subjects' reasonable expectations are unclear, then you have an ethical problem. If someone might reasonably expect that their statements were private or for the benefit of the local community only, then you must ask permission before quoting them.

Maintainers of electronic communications media should work to establish shared expectations among their users. New subscribers to lists should be sent statements of the list policy on quotation. Online services should include this information in their terms of service. The consequences for violating such policies should be outlined. Users should also be warned that in most cases, such policies are difficult to enforce, so extra caution about what you chose to say is warranted.

4. TREAT PSEUDONYMS THE SAME WAY YOU WOULD TREAT REAL NAMES

Pseudonyms are not fundamentally different from real names. In many cases, a pseudonym may be indirectly traceable to its owner. Even if a pseudonym is not traceable, people often use the same pseudonym over an extended period of time within a community of people who come to know them by that name. The reputation associated with the pseudonym matters to them. It functions in many respects just like a real name, and should be treated as such. If you would change the person's real name in that situation, you should also change their online pseudonym.

5. WHEN IN DOUBT, CONSULT WITH COLLEAGUES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Applying ethical criteria designed for older media to electronic communications is not a straight-forward process. If you have any doubts as to whether you are handling a situation appropriately, ask both professional colleagues and members of the community you are studying for feedback.

Guest materializes out of thin air.

>;ctime()

=> "Mon Jan 20 14:37:19 1997 EST"

Guest disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

Guest materializes out of thin air.

ergonomic-erratum materializes out of thin air.

TealGuest materializes out of thin air.

Pink_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Xareth materializes out of thin air.

PinkGuest says, "Hi, is this the place for the symposium?"

Xareth [pink]: yes for more info, read the sign

TurquoiseGuest materializes out of thin air.

PinkGuest says, "thanks..."

Kristina has disconnected.

Gustavo materializes out of thin air.

Pink_Guest says, "esp. considering today's topics of ethics in research, I should point out that I'm a reporter for the Chronicle of Higher Education's Web site, Academe Today,... I'm interested in sitting in on the discussion and possibly writing a brief article... please let me know if there are any objections..."

Lynne materializes out of thin air.

>@who

Player name Connected Idle time Location

Scooter (#10916) 13 minutes 0 seconds Summer Conference Room
ergonomic-erratum (#9821) 8 minutes 5 seconds Summer Conference Room
Kaisa (#10808) 14 minutes 6 seconds Dave's Place
Gold_Guest (#360) 10 minutes 11 seconds Applying for a character
Pink_Guest (#359) 4 minutes 15 seconds Summer Conference Room
RedGuest (#114) 5 minutes 25 seconds purple-crayon.media.mit.e
Lynne (#10925) a minute 27 seconds Summer Conference Room
Dave (#2167) 7 minutes 28 seconds Dave's Place
Gustavo (#10646) 55 seconds 31 seconds Summer Conference Room

Coyote (#10608) 5 minutes 36 seconds Far Cottage
Andrei (#10278) an hour 37 seconds Semantic Observatory
Silver_Guest (#361) 49 seconds 49 seconds purple-crayon.media.mit.e
SamH (#11203) 15 minutes 49 seconds Confabulation [editing no
Turquoise_Guest (#358) 3 minutes 54 seconds Summer Conference Room
TealGuest (#347) 4 minutes 56 seconds Summer Conference Room
Xareth (#11130) 13 minutes a minute Summer Conference Room
LurkingHorror (#8844) 18 minutes 3 minutes Summer Conference Room
Guest (#113) 13 minutes 6 minutes Summer Conference Room
Luna (#5585) 2 hours 9 minutes Summer Conference Room
Amy (#75) an hour 45 minutes Amy's Office
jaime (#2) an hour an hour Jaime's capacitor
Tari (#2921) an hour an hour Tari's Very Fashionable H
Jay (#909) 2 hours an hour Jay's Home
Diane (#3411) 4 hours an hour Summer Conference Room
gandalf(#10234) 10 hours 10 hours Pizzeria

Total: 25 players, 17 of whom have been active recently.

There are 2 players invisible to you.

>;ctime()

=> "Mon Jan 20 14:50:06 1997 EST"

LurkingHorror says, "PinkGuest the whole symposium is open and being recorded - anything can be used"

Silver_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Pink_Guest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Pink_Guest.

MitchP materializes out of thin air.

MitchP waves.

Turquoise_Guest says, "is this where the symposium will be held?"

SilverGuest says, "I think so."

Chartreuse_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Kristina has connected.

Coyote materializes out of thin air.

MitchP waves to Coyote.

Indigo_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Chartreuse_Guest [B[B@who

Lynne smiles at the wiley one

Daniel materializes out of thin air.

MitchP waves to Lynne.

MitchP waves to Kristina.

Lynne grins at mitch

ChartreuseGuest waves to all

MitchP waves to Chartreuse_Guest.

Dave (copyrighted) materializes out of thin air.

Kaisa arrives quietly.

Amy materializes out of thin air.

TurquoiseGuest waves[D[D

Coyote laughs at Dave's copyrighted status and instantly copyrights his tail, fur, and ears.

Lynne grins at dave

MitchP waves to Dave (copyrighted).

Pink_Guest materializes out of thin air.

MitchP waves to Kaisa.

Kaisa waves to MitchP.

Lavender_Guest materializes out of thin air.

SamH materializes out of thin air.

Luna blinks...wakes up somewhat

MitchP waves to Luna [theoretically dissertating].

Luna says, "hi, everyone"

Identity materializes out of thin air.

MitchP smiles at Luna [theoretically dissertating].

MitchP waves to Identity.

Gustavo has disconnected.

LurkingHorror steps out of the shadows and into the light

Identity smiles at MithP

Coyote starts logging

Lynne smiles at luna.J wasn't the only one napping?

Dave is fixing and is therefore copyright protected

MitchP mithg be home napping now were it not for all this :-)

Luna [to Lynne]: nope! actually, I have been working, glad you made it!

Luna hands lynne some strong black coffee

MitchP grins at Luna [theoretically dissertating].

PinkGuest says, "hi everyone!"

Luna [to Dave]: good work on the copyrights issue.

Lynne adds it to her caffeine and chocolate supply

GoldGuest materializes out of thin air.

Chartreuse_Guest says, "Hi, this is Jeff Young with the Chronicle of Higher Education... I've been having connection problems, so I missed the response to my last question... if there was any response"

Xareth . o O (question?)

Amy [to ChartreuseGuest]: hi there Jeff!

MitchP missed Jeffs last question itself

Luna [to ChartreuseGuest]: if you were pink guest, no body directly responded.

Gustavo has connected.

tina materializes out of thin air.

Coyote grins

MitchP waves to tina.

Amy [to Chartreuse_Guest]: I appreciate your letting people know, Jeff

Dave anticipates lag

Pink_Guest says, "no, pink guest is me, Teresa"

MitchP smiles at Pink_Guest.

Gold_Guest waves to everybody

Chartreuse_Guest says, "I'm with Academe Today, the Chronicle's Web service, and I was wondering if anyone would mind if I sat in and possible wrote an article about this symposium..."

GreenGuest materializes out of thin air.

Coyote says, "Yes, Jeff, I also appreciate it. "

LurkingHorror says, "sure JEff"

Pink_Guest wave MitchP

Chartreuse_Guest says, "thanks all..."

FuchsiaGuest materializes out of thin air.

Amy [to Chartreuse_Guest]: I can't promise we'll all be that interesting, but I believe we've all agreed that today's events are on the record/quatable

Chartreuse_Guest looks around at the crowd

Chartreuse_Guest says, "great!"

Coyote says, "Jeff, I consider this to be a public event. Think we agree on that."

Luna nods appreciatively, but thinks the matter of 'if anyone would mind' is really difficult to answer

Amy [to Chartreuse_GuesfJ: we'll *try* to be interesting....

tina chuckles

Gustavo has disconnected.

Amy points to the sign, and asks everyone to please type 'read sign'

MitchP grins at Amy.

Turquoise_Guest @who

Amy says, "well, thanks for coming everyone!"

Turquoise_Guest smiles

LurkingHorror says, "no problem :)"

Coyote smiles

Xareth smiles

Lis~ot materializes out of thin air.

ChartreuseGuest says, "hmm... isn't that a bit of a controadication?"

Amy says, "special thanks to those of you who are up at odd hours to make this time slot. (I see at least one .au address). We tried to pick a time to be convenient to as many people as possible, but it's impossible to accomodate absolutely everyone"

Coyote hands Lynne in Perth more coffee

Lynne grins at coyote

FuchsiaGuest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove FuchsiaGuest.

Chartreuse_Guest [B[B[B[B[B[BsI see... but what does that mean to a journalist interested in possibly quoting from the session?

Amy says, "As I mentioned in the sign, I am hoping that we can focus on the issues this afternoon, and stay away from accusations directed at individuals"

Tari materializes out of thin air.

Lavender_Guest says [about flutes], "awake at last"

Gray_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Amy says, "three people—Lynne, Coyote, and myself—have written short statements aimed at getting the conversation going"

Cerulean_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Amy says, "thanks very much Lynne and Coyote for your contributions, and thanks everyone who has contributed to the "research list over the last month. I hope this is just the beginning of conversations on that list, not the end"

The housekeeper arrives to cart Gustavo off to bed.

RobtC materializes out of thin air.

Coyote smiles gratefully

Amy says, "I'd like to start by discussing issues in the first of those posts, 214 on "research"

Chartreuse_Guest says, "That seems very different than the rules of a public forum... "

ergonomic-erratum [amy]: is this being conducted in a presentation format or some more open debate, it isn't clear on the sign

Amy says, "to read it, type: @peek 214 on "research"

Diane wakes up.

Jay materializes out of thin air.

Amy [to ergonomic-erratum]: this is an open, brainstorming sort of session

Amy says, "everyone should feel free to talk at once :-)"

ergonomic-erratum [amy]: great.

Coyote grins

Amy says, "you can use the 'about' feature to target your comments. Type 'read plaque' for info on how to use it"

LurkingHorror thinks the opening statements are too highbrow ;)

Amy says, "so to start, I'd like to ask everyone to read 214 and offer any thoughts or questions it raises for you. We'll move on to 215 and 216 later"

Drew materializes out of thin air.

Gray_Guest says, " A lot of material there!"

Amy smiles to Gray_Guest

MitchP says, "which I had to read too fawst to really assimilate :-("

Ilene materializes out of thin air.

Amy [to Coyote]: I'm not sure I agree about discipline not mattering....

BethK (hailing a taxi cab) materializes out of thin air.

MitchP says, "I think, though, that there really is not much different there form the ethices odf other research"

paolo has arrived.

Amy [to Coyote]: Doesn't a journalist have different ethical responsibilities than an anthropologist, for example?

ergonomic-erratum [mitch]: yes, a bit difficult to address the whole post. The critical, and problematic idea for me, is that there is one code of ethics that we will or have all agreed to.

Gray_Guest says, " One way to approach this is to assume that we must use the same protections as in RL research..."

Tari says, "i think i'd like someone to define 'public'—well, maybe i want everyone to define it every time they use it, but anyhow it's turned into a weasel word"

GrayGuest says, " and then only alter them when the demands of online research require it."

Tari [to Coyote]: how do you use 'public' in your statement?

Coyote says, "Perhaps I can summarize. Three points - that inspite of disciplinary differences in methods, there are core ethical issues. Two, that many if not most ethical issues on-line are similar to those off-line, and 3) that there are challenges."

lynn materializes out of thin air.

LurkingHorror thinksd that MOO'S & MUD's should mirror real life in terms of room discussions — ie:

conference rooms are open... rooms are only private if access is limited

mahina (compelling, passionate, perplexed) falls into your midst

ergonomic-erratum [gray]: But, do we all agree on one code of RL research?

MitchP [to Amy]: why would you think their responsibilities were different?

LurkingHorror thinks public vs non-public is clearcut

Coyote says, "Oh, Public... I mean public in the sense that it is open to scrutiny and that one may legitimately expect to be observed by others. Generic public behavior."

Daniel says, "But since MOOs usually require membership, is there really such a thing as a 'public' space on a MOO?"

Jay says, "are malls public spaces?"

MitchP [to Daniel]: anyone can be a guest on a moo

Lynne looks at lynn and decides to change her name to razezy to avoid confusion

Jay says, "some moos don't have guests"

Lavender_Guest says, "I'm a guest"

lynn [to Lynne]: sorry

MitchP [to Jay]: by some definitions yes, others no

RobtC says, "But we can and do bar some sites from even guesting"

Coyote says, "Membership in MOOs is very open, though I acknowledge there is variation."

*** Saving to disk. All activity will stop for a few minutes. ***

*** Finished saving to disk. ***

Stu materializes out of thin air.

lynn thinks public is pretty relative to expectations about who will be reading/participating/passing thru a given place

Neon_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Jay [to Coyote]: I'd qualify that a little more. Membership in my workmoo implies you're an employee of The MITRE Corporation, for example.

Chartreuse_Guest [B[B[B[B[B[B[B[B]whisper "at some point could you privately send me a comment hoon what your goals are for this symposium" to amy

Dave draws your attention to the last post on *re and suggests that many of the issues being discussed here are matters of copyright law and not merely of research ethics

LurkingHorror anyone can be a guest - but MOO rooms can be locked out to certain people - ie: you could run a clubhouse that allows only certain people

Tari says, "well, my problem is, there's been a lot of discussion aimed at making rules according to what is and isn't public, which would be nice and clearcut-if the distinction between public and non-public were actually clear-cut and agreed on."

Ken bends reality to his will and pops into being.

Jay [to Coyote]: there are a bunch of MOOs out there right now that aren't open at all

CeruleanGuest has disconnected.

LavenderGuest has disconnected.

Stu has disconnected.

Neon_Guest has left.

The housekeeper arrives to remove CeruleanGuest.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Lavender_Guest.

Amy [to MitchP]: well, A journalist's first responsibility is to society, and if that brings harm to an individual, that's justified in relation to the greater good. On the other hand, an anthropologist's first responsibility is to cause no harm to individuals, and the research should simply be cancelled if that can't be accomplished.

Neon_Guest has arrived.

Stu has connected.

Amy apologizes for the dramatic pause :-)

Barry materializes out of thin air.

RobtC says, "Journalists who do harm to non-public figures are in trouble"

MitchP [to Amy]: but certain kinds of journalism are arguably unethical

LurkingHorror agrees with Amy's definition of responsibilities

Amy nods to both RobtC and MitchP

ergonomic-erratum says, "But the expectations of a "public" have been drastically changed over the last year.

DejaNews for instance has upset many members of the Usenet community."

lynn thinks it is clear that anthropologists don't always know in advance the impact their work will have on the individuals

Ken . o O ()

Amy nods to ergo. "Yes, there are lots of folks who thought they were safe to post on USENET about personal things, and are now finding out otherwise. The key problem is not whether things are a matter of public record or not, but the fact that so many people have incorrect expectations."

Coyote says, "I think we do have our finger on one of the key issues here. And to make matters even more complex— there are widely varying levels of "publicness" even within a given VR setting— as several of you are noting."

Andrei [GPC] materializes out of thin air.

Daniel says, "Besides, who defines 'greater good'? Missionaries believe they are acting for the greater good."

GrayGuest says, " And what happens when we determine that we can't just observe—how do we get informed consent on the Internet?"

OrangeGuest materializes out of thin air.

RobtC says, "and simply being in the news does not make one a public figure—Richard Jewell has collected from NBC I believe"

Andrei nods and waves

HazelGuest materializes out of thin air.

Amy nods to Daniel. "Interesting point"

Luna [to Amy]: i would suggest that, as researchers, we need to adjust our expectations, perhaps more than the members of established on-line communities need to adjust theirs.

>:ctime()

=> "Mon Jan 20 15:22:09 1997 EST"

>@whois

Player name Real Name Email Address

OrangeGuest

Barry Barry Hayes bhayes@CS.Stanford.EDU

Hazel_Guest

Stu susan m. mings mingss@rpi.edu

OchreGuest

mahina margit misangyi watts watts@uhunix.uhcc.Hawaii.edu

lynn Lynn Cherny cherny@csl.stanford.edu

Neon_Guest

BethK Beth E. Kolko bek@utarlg.uta.edu

paolo paolo petta paolo@oefai.ai.univie.ac.at

Polka_Dot_Guest

Ilene Ilene Frank ifrank@lib.usf.edu

Jay Jay Carlson nop@theory.cs.mankato.msus.edu

RobtC Bob Canary canary@cs.uwp.edu

Gray_Guest <165.134.100.189>

Lis~ot Sue Thomas thomas@innotts.co.uk

tina Tina Taylor ttaylor@binah.cc.brandeis.edu

Identity Keith Hampton khampton@chass.utoronto.ca

Green_Guest

Daniel Dan Rose rose@apple.com

Pink_Guest <204.119.201.25>

Kristina Austina M. Vainius austina@media.mit.edu

Indigo_Guest <149.80.1.177>

Chartreuse_Guest

MitchP Mitch Pravatiner mapravat@prairienet.org

razey Silver_Guest <130.91.68.49>

Turquoise_Guest

TealGuest

Coyote Malcolm Parks - but call me, Mac.macp@u.washington.edu

Dave ergonomic-erratum Michele White WHI@cunyvmsl.gc.cuny.edu

GoldGuest <128.18.20.108>

Guest

Scooter Austina M. Vainius austina@media.mit.edu

Xareth Edward Gray, Jr. gray@uhavax.hartford.edu

Kaisa SamH LurkingHorror Noel Germundson ael 17@freenet.carleton.ca

Andrei Andrej Skerlep andrei.skerlep@uni-lj.si

jaime Amy Bruckman asb@media.mit.edu

Amy Amy Bruckman asb@media-lab.media.mit.edu

Tari Tari Fanderclai tari@ucet.ufl.edu

Luna Diane Diane Maluso maluso@servtech.com

gandalf michele michelotto michelotto@padova.infh.it

Jay [to Amy]: Well, some of these issues could be mitigated by social constraints—wiretapping, for instance, is widely viewed as eeeevil.

Amy [to Luna]: or work to make sure expectations are established in the broader community

Coyote says, "I see no problem with quoting Usenet posts— as long as the source is not given."

Jay [to Amy]: But that's because of a certain culture about the technology

MitchP agrees with Coyote on that one

Luna says, "in the case of This event, you made it clear in the sign that we were participating in a public event and that our words could be quoted."

Jay [to Coyote]: Awfully easy to altavista back to author given the text

Amy [to Coyote]: but the society for professional journalists just came out saying that it's OK to quote stuff there and attribute it, no permission required

Diane nods Jay

Luna bows to ChartreuseGuest, who can now feel easier about writing an article about the event.

Dave [to Coyote]: Quoting from Usenet posts is an infringement of copylaw protection

ergonomic-erratum [coyote]: but not quoting the speaker would be poor scholarly method in some circles.

Gray_Guest says, " Hmmm, not so sure about that. I would say you would need to identify the post"

RobtC says [about usenet], "And suppose the author has also produced a hardcopy of what he has posted, thus making it probably copyrighted"

MitchP [to ergonomic-erratum]: anonymol8us quotation is legitimate though

Jay [to Dave]: Better shut down Usenet then, cos millions of posts with quoted texts are in my news spool right now.

Coyote says, "Good point Jay — that's why people who are really concerned, on very sensitive topics, often use anonymous remailers."

Daniel [to Dave]: That depends on whether it's fair use.

Luna says, "but such a clear case of 'public speaking' is rarely announce, but often assumed on a community level."

lynn was a bit bemused by the general agreement that it was ok to log this event as public, but the mailing list was not considered such? or maybe she misremembers.

LurkingHorror always gets full permission before quoting anything - usenet, moo's, or otherwise - prefers to do interviews

Amy [to Luna]: yes, I was trying to establish clear expectations. The main reason I decided this had to be public is because it can't meaningfully not be public. If we tried to encourage people to view it as private, people still might quote things and we can't really stop them. So warning everyone that it's public seemed the only option

Dave agrees with Daniel that the doctrine of fair use is an exception

razey thinks the best policy is to ask permission, and see how the individual would prefer the post to be used (anonymous, net-name or "real" name)

Tari [to Amy]: somehow that feels like giving in

Tari says, "i mean, it may well be that this should be public"

MitchP nods to razey.

Coyote says, "You know, folks, the definition of what's public here is not really going to be decided by our vote. Some spaces are simply public by their brute empirical nature — anybody can get to them."

Amy [to lynn]: I'm not sure we ever agreed about the mailing list
MitchP nods to Coyote.

Diane says, "amy's decision seems really pragmatic to me."

lynn says, "oh"

HazelGuest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove HazelGuest.

Tari says, "but i feel like it's the same reasoning that would be "i guess i'll just open my house to thieves since they'll come in anyhow and that way they'll be invited""

Luna [to Coyote]: good point, but does it give blanket permissions to researchers?

Jay says, "well sure, the public/private part is socially constructed"

Tari says, "well, sort of the same reasoning"

Jay says, "the technology doesn't overdetermine it though"

Ken says, "anyone can be removed from said spaces, too."

Dave [to Jay]: I'm not suggesting that implementation of copyright law in cyberspace is straightforward. I am suggesting that if you quote someone's Usenet post, she could sue you

Amy says, "the systems mailing list threatens anyone who forwards a post from there with revoking their membership"

RobtC thinks Amy's analogy of a café is appropriate—a place may be public in access without there being a reasonable expectation that speech there is public

Coyote says, "[to luna] in some cases, yes, at least in terms of access. Obviously other ethics concerns would also come into play."

Diane says, "people logging don't feel like they're doing anything wrong, i'd guess, it's what is done with the log that is the issue."

Ken says, "such as keeping it forever"

Jay [to Dave]: I can sue anyone about anything. Success is another matter.

Ken says, "if you have a log, anyone that can gain access to your computer can have the log"

Dave [to Jay]: agreed, but it's still a legal issue, not simply a matter of research "ethics"

Jay [to Dave]: agreed

Coyote nods to Jay and Dave

Luna says, "i agree with Dave on the copyrights issue."

lynn wonders how legality issues got rolled in with ethics

mahina grins at lynn

BethK (hailing a taxi cab) nods to lynn.

Coyote says, "I'm wondering if we might agree on some research practices that we would more or less all agree on as unethical in this regard."

Tari [to lynn]: heh, possibly because too many people's ethics are determined solely by the legal system?

MitchP [to Coyote]: probably

Dave [to lynn]: because the representation of many of the issues as matter of ethics is misleading...they are legal

Amy takes a question from Coyote's post: "What constitutes informed consent in an observational

MitchP [to Tari]: you may be right:-)

Amy says, "or survey study on-line where there is no actual signature on a form? ""

ergonomic-erratum [Coyote]: It seems that the type of quote or log would in part determine what ethical responsibility there was.

Polka_Dot_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Gray_Guest says, " Phone surveys routinely get informed consent without a signature..."

lynn would question whether signed forms constitutes all that is required in informed consent, in any case

Coyote says, "Our approach has been to state the issue and then say that return of a survey constituted consent."

GrayGuest says, " But you still need to explain the study and obtain consent verbally"

Silver_Guest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove SilverGuest.

Luna says, "i am not a lawyer, but I have a vernacular belief that 'law' is codified ethics."

Jay [to Amy]: Yeah, I thought that was interesting. I'm almost willing to accept an explicit statement from the subject to the effect of "I know what's going on and I consent." That's not a legal document, but forging consent is a much bigger deal than just having a misunderstanding with subjects.

Coyote says, "I also believe strongly that studies need to be described and researchers must make their backgrounds known/available."

OchreGuest materializes out of thin air.

Jay [to Amy]: But only in noncontroversial cases

Diane says, "can't we present the person with a note and then ask them to give their informed consent as we log it?"

VioletGuest materializes out of thin air.

MitchP [to Luna]: there still is a difference between codified professional ethics and public law

Tari says, "the question that made me ask that is "why is there no signed form?""

razey says, "on-line surveys often have a subject information page and require the user to click on an "I consent" button to access the survey itself

Jay [to Amy]: I suppose that's not good enough by the Federal standards

Tari says, "augh, i mean, the question that that question made me ask is etc."

Diane says, "so our participants can say "i consent""

Coyote nods to diane and razey's comments.

Amy [to Tari]: since I'm logging interactions on MOOSE Crossing, and since kids are involved, I get * signed forms* from people. I wouldn't be comfortable otherwise

Violet_Guest says [about expansion], "Amy! I thought I would say Hi. This is Peter anders"

Tari [to Diane]: no, why is there *no* signed from in coyote's exmaple

Diane [to Tari]: ok

Gray_Guest says, " Yes, verbal consent is often acceptable"

lynn [to Amy]: but (and I don't refer to your own study), I worry about the comfort level afforded by those signed forms

Tari says, "i know what signed forms are for...why can't we have them in online research?"

ChartreuseGuest says, "As a journalist, I'm still confused... can I quote from this session without people's permission, or would that be unethical, even though this is a public session?"

Tari says, "or why don't we"

Diane [to Tari]: how do we have a signature in a moo?

Jay [to Tari]: cos people are too lazy to send out real paper, or don't want to give out physical addresses

Ken says, "you don't have the signature in the MOO"

Coyote says, "On MOOSE crossing of course, you can get real hands to sign real forms, but when studies are global this is not possible, or at least practical."

HazelGuest materializes out of thin air.

Amy [to lynn]: I'm happy for folks to discuss my study in particular. Having said that, I don't quite understand your question... can you rephrase?

MitchP [to Ken]: unless they mail back a reply to a moomailed form

Tari says, "you, well, what jay said, you mail paper or you fax paper or something."

Jay [to Coyote]: It's possible, it's just more annoying than people are used to.

Ken says, "Right."

MauveGuest materializes out of thin air.

Guest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Guest.

Tari says, "why isn't it practical?"

Diane says, "well... if i study lambda because i want an anonymous sample... then i can't do mailing."

Coyote says, "No, its so impractical as to rule out doing the research."

Tari says, "do you mean it isn't convenient?"

Amy [to ChartreuseGuest]: for the purposes of this session, quote away! For the general case, I have no idea when it is or is not appropriate. The difficulty of questions of that nature is why we're here!

Diane nods to Coyote.

GrayGuest says, " But the thornier issue is not HOW to get informed consent, but under what situations must you obtain it."

lynn [to Amy]: eh, sorry, i meant that i worry that having signatures makes the researchers say 'ok, i'm all ethical now, they've agreed' and the signers to feel like they can't complain about anything, in a culture where signature are legally binding on agreements

Xareth says, "This seession has a set of ground rules. Are published ground rules enforcable?"

ergonomic-erratum [Diane]: what about hte researchers warning on Lambda.

Jay [chants]: consent is too hard! research is more important!

Amy [to Jay]: I get people to send me real paper

razey says, "many MOOs would not consent to giving real life details in order to sign a consent form"

Ken says, "maybe if you can't be bothered"

Drew has left.

Ken says, "to get the conset"

Ken says, "you shouldn't be doing the research"

MitchP [to razey]: indeed,os would not

Coyote says, "Informed consent is legally required in almost all cases."

Tari is with Ken.

mahina agrees with coyote

Daniel says, "I think it's less of a problem in a more-or-less controlled experiment like MOOSE Crossing. But on a place like LambdaMOO, should everyone have to agree to something every time s/he logs in saying 'I realize that someone *might* be logging part of this'?"

MitchP [to razey]: =most

Jay [to Amy]: I know, and I've always liked your public statements to that effect.

Diane [to ergonomic-erratum]: it doesn't say i need consent from the typist in paper form, only from the typist in lambdatext form.

Gray_Guest says, " I agree that it should be required, but our earlier discussion of public/private space implies that sometimes you don't need to get it."

mahina [to Daniel]: perhaps not agree...but one should just *know* that it is a possibility and act accordingly

Daniel says, "And then is that blanket statement sufficient consent for when it actually happens?"

MitchP [to Daniel]: logging is always a possibility, anywhere in moospace, usually not disclosed and usually for private purposes

orbital (Surfing on Sinewaves) materializes out of thin air.

Coyote says, "Everytime you take information from a respondent, there should be informed consent, yes. (Except in the case of public behavior in which the subject is not identified — see APA)"

Andrei [gray]: You need to get it only for privater conversations.

ergonomic-erratum [Diane]: But how are those forms of consent, or any consent really verifiable.

Jay says, "You could just put up a web page and say "print this out, don't write down your character name, sign it, fax or physical mail it to me""

Amy [to lynn]: the informed consent form I use was approved by MIT's Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects (COUHES). It includes some standard language required in all such forms used at MIT, including info on how to contact me and also the chair of COUHES if they feel they are mistreated in any way. So they have a neutral third-party highly trained in these issues available to hear any complaint

Jay [to MitchP]: Yes, but is it ethical?

RobtC says [about informed consent], "Ideally, someone other than the researcher would view the consent form to see if it gave adequate information"

lynn says, "only if they feel empowered enough to take that step"

Diane [to ergonomic-erratum]: my assumption, and it is just an assumption, is that each typist is responsible for the behavior of their registered character, if the character gives consent, then i take it as consent,

ergonomic-erratum says, "From my personal experience, characters on Lambda usually request that they see your full text before you can get consent for the quotation."

Violet_Guest says [about expansion], "I have a couple of graduate students doing a cognitive map of Lambda-MOO right now I havevhd my students do this sort of thing before. I have asked them to check with the wizard(s) prior to proceeding. Is there anyother courtesy we should stend?"

Coyote says, "Yes, RobtC is quite right — third party should see form."

GrayGuest says, " The problem with most informed consent forms is that they often use language that is difficult for real research participants to understand."

Ken says, "The informed consent of SOME of the parties"

Gray_Guest says, " Consent forms often protect the institutions more than the participants."

Ken says, "isn't exceedingly useful, given quoting some people might imply things said by others who did not consent."

Jay [to ergonomic-erratum]: boy, some people are just so testy

MitchP grins at Jay.

Jay [to Gray_Guest]: but they're better than nothing

Bernie materializes out of thin air.

RobtC agrees with Gray_Guest—institutional CYA is the main purpose for Human Subject committees

Tari says, "maybe we should let the subjects make up a form too"

ergonomic-erratum [Jay]: but the point of that type of consent is that it controls what kind of critiques you can

perform.

BethK says, "Are there conditions under which we can agree logging is unethical?"

Tari says, "about how the reserachers have to agree to treat them"

Tari says, "reserachers"

Tari says, "you know"

Jay [to ergonomic-erratum]: agreed

Amy thinks we should start discussing Lynne's post, 215. (Though feel free to still comment on Coyote's.)

Everyone, please take a second and type: @peek 215 on *research

GrayGuest says, "Yes, a good consent form is a contract outlining rights and responsibilities of all parties."

Coyote likes BethK's question.

MitchP [to BethK]: i can think of unethical uses other than by researchers, but none specifically by the likes of we

Lis~ot says, "we have been talking about 'pure' research ro far.."

orbital goes home.

Lis~ot says, "but what about jounr journalistic enquiry?"

Dave [to Tari]: When I do ethnographic research offline, I make three copies of each consent form. I keep one, the informant gets one, and I deposit one with the University

Luna [to MitchP]: really? I can think of unethical uses of logging by researchers

Orange_Guest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Orange_Guest.

Ken says, "uh, there are plenty of unethical uses og logs by researchers"

Tari [to Dave]: but that isn't really the same as what i said

mahina has disconnected.

BethK [to MitchP]: really?

Amy says, "has anyone here read the APA code? In what ways is it different from other such codes?"

Luna says [about logging], "we could keep logs of personal interactions, thing meant to be 'off-the-record' by our participants"

Tari [to Dave]: you made up the form, no matter how many copies you made of it.

Violet_Guest says [about expansion], "coyote! The cognitive maps are 3D flow charts of the spaces the students encounter. Someties they ask for advice from other users but rarely quote them directly. We try to let others know what we are up to. Ask Amy about the map (Logical Adjacency Model) we did of MediaMOO."

Diane has read and posted the apa code to *research

Dave [to Tari]: Yes, that's true. But the form has been vetted by my IRB

>;ctime()

=> "Mon Jan 20 15:40:29 1997 EST"

>@whois

Player name Real Name Email Address

orbital Allen Manning Allen.Manning@plato.wadham.ox.ac.uk

Bernie Phil loughran loughrp@wmin.ac.uk

Hazel_Guest <204.32.155.98>

Mauve_Guest

VioletGuest

Barry Barry Hayes bhayes@CS.Stanford.EDU

Stu susan m. mings mingss@rpi.edu

OchreGuest

lynn Lynn Cherny cherny@csl.stanford.edu

Neon_Guest

BethK Beth E. Kolko bek@utarlg.uta.edu

paolo paolo petta paolo@oefai.ai.univie.ac.at

Polka_Dot_Guest

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Andrei Andrej Skerlep andrej.skerlep@uni-lj.si

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Tari Tari Fanderclai tari@ucet.ufl.edu

Luna Diane Diane Maluso maluso@servtech.com

gandalfmichele michelotto michelotto@padova.infn.it

Daniel says, "Do journalists have an explicit code analogous to the APA's?"

ergonomic-erratum says, "I think we are focusing our attention on researcher responsibilities. My concern is that extra stringent rules that control the mores of researchers prevent an ability to perform any kind of critique of the system. What about the responsibility of systems or communities to allow space for critique or an attempt at revising the system through textual examples."

Lis~ot says, "i am sure journalists have a code of practicew"

Luna says [about logging], "we could give logs to third but interested parties, thereby probiding possibly damanging material to the public at large"

Amy thinks Peter/Violet Guest raises an interesting issue. "Peter's students are studying the structure of virtual spaces. In what way do any of these issues apply to that sort of work?"

MitchP [to Luna]: what sort of unethical research uses can to....you think of for logs?

GrayGuest says, " I was trained as a psychologist, so I've had to read the APA ethical guidelines a few times!"

Violet_Guest says [about expansion], "Thanks Amy;-)"

Tari says, "amy or peter, could you explain what you mean by 'the structure' and what we're applying it to?"

Amy [to Gray_Guest]: any comments on how you would apply them to issues of research in virtual communities?

Tari says, "heh, that wasn't very clear"

Coyote says, "Well, here's a couple of things I would find very problematic about logging..."

Amy [to Tari]: the form of the space. What room is next to what. Public space, private space

Diane says, "if peter's students' or peter's writings identify any mooster by their moo or rl name or other distinct identifiers, then it is problematic."

ergonomic-erratum says, "Are descriptions of rooms and characters quotable without permission or would these texts be considered part of the character/user?"

Jay [to ergonomic-erratum]: My initial thought was that it's better to be too strict than too liberal at the beginning of this field.

GrayGuest says, " Well, a large part of the APA guidelines would not apply."

razey thinks under the APA guidelines researchers wouldn't log without informed consent from all participants when conducting research

@ -MitchP

Coyote says, "Making a log for research purposes without telling all people on it that you are doing so.

Misrepresenting the nature of what you might do with a log."

GrayGuest says, " But procedures for informed consent are obviously one applicable area."

Tari says, "what i'm asking is, are you okay, thanks amy...that sounds like you're only talking about room-based spaces like muds, though...or is that all we're supposed to talk about?"

razey thinks APA guidelines would apply!

Violet_Guest says [about expansion], " We have been mapping the spaces on a number of MUDs over the past few years. The rendition of those maps are simple ball and stick diagrams - likemolecular models. Th"

BethK [to Coyote]: Yes

Coyote agrees with Razey!

Amy says, "Peter's students are studying things like the fact that the more structured part of MediaMOO's space (Curtis common) was added LATER than the more sprawling parts, which is the reverse of the normal pattern" mday [The Cognomial] materializes out of thin air.

MitchP has disconnected.

Diane [to Coyote]: i did a research project in which i made logs with i then content analyzed in a very general way. no quotes, data reported as aggregate, do you think i should have told everyone i was logging and why?

Luna waves to mday

Jay razes downtown and puts up a pedestrian mall

Xareth [violet]: have you mapped restricted entry as well as public spaces?

RobtC says [about logging], "Another problem with login is that unless someone else has logged the same session, one can never be sure the log hasn't been altered, making it problematic as evidence—though that may not be a matter of ethics"

Dave would like to "hear" more about the research Peter is doing. Has any of it been made public?

Diane [to Coyote]: it was brief interactions, most in public spaces.

ergonomic-erratum [Diane]: how would we perform a political critique of the system and participants behavior while following those guidelines?

Violet_Guest says [about expansion], "They are then"

mday waves

The housekeeper arrives to cart mahina off to bed.

Tari says, "doesn't the space itself—the particular mud—get a say in what researchers there can/can't do?"

Gray_Guest says, " I think most of us would agree that we should get the permission to use a log. But how about a grayer issue..."

Diane [to Tari]: i think it should.

Tari says, "i'm thinking that a mud with a stated research policy could alleviate a lot of the problems"

Gray_Guest says, " What if someone who belongs to a MUD community objects to the use of a log, even though she/he is not part of the log in question?"

Amy smiles to GrayGuest. "Posts on mailing lists are certainly fuzzier"

VioletGuest says [about expansion], " Yes, I have presented the results at the last ACM conference and at an ACADIA conference November"

MitchP has connected.

Coyote says, "[to Diane] Yes, I think that people should have been informed."

MitchP got cut off by accident

Gray_Guest says, " That is, is there community ownership of online communities?"

Bernie . o O (permission to use a log in a public space too?)

Diane [to Coyote]: even if it was public behavior?

Amy says, "does it matter whether you're logging in a public or private room?"

Dave [to Amy]: I don't think you're right about the legal status of posts to mailing lists. If the messages are fixed, they are protected by copyright

Bernie says, "I think so"

Diane [to Coyote]: i ask because apa says no problem but this crowd seems to lean the other way.

Jay [to Amy]: what's a public room?

Tari says, "can i cut off the whole debate for my space by clearly posting 'my mud isn't public'?"

Coyote says, "[to diane] Oh, I didn't see that part — ok to log public behavior without consent as long as no one is identified. Just like public behavior in apa guidelines."

Andrei [diane]: Public behavior on the MOO is quotable.... fair use principle might apply

Amy [to Dave]: I have no opinion on the legality, there's a difference though between the right and the remedy. Even though you might have the right to sue, it's probably not cost-effective for you to do so

Luna [to Tari]: i think you can. Just as Amy has made -this- discussion public and open to quoting.

Tari says, "and then making the researcher rules i can live with?"

Andrei [tari]: Good that we are not on your MUD

Bernie says, "I make movies....and I record sound in public space all the time...is that wrong?"

Amy is very interested in Diane's comment. "Diane, can you tell us more about in what RL circumstances consent is not required?"

Dave [to Amy]: If we're talking cost-effectiveness, then what's the point of discussing research *ethics*!

Tari [to Andrei]: well, some people might say you'd be safer there.

mday likes the idea of policy up front.

Diane [to Tari]: you can. but pragmatically, could you stop someone from logging and writing up something and then publishing? and if not, what is your recourse?

Coyote notes that Diane and Mac/coyote are drawing straight from APA guidelines.

Tari [to Diane]: then i toad you and sitelock you and write to your institution

Diane nods to Tari.

MitchP says, "You might want to look at ASA code, at <http://www.asanet.org/ethics.html>"

Luna says [about logging], "i think that individual MOOs should establish their own research guidelines, given how difficult it is for researchers to agree on them!"

mday says, "ugly lawsuits? Yuck."

Amy [to Dave]: I think ethical arguments are useful, but legal ones are of limited applicability, since the law is in general totally braindead on the subject of electronic communications media

MitchP says, "make that /ethics.htm"

Andrei chuckles and nods to Tari

Diane says, "so we have social sanctions for researchers who break our ethical guidelines."

Amy [to Dave]: the law is poorly written, and non enforcable in a meaningful sense. So we're better off talking ethics rather than law

Diane says, "and those sanctions involve online shunning and rl repercussions?"

Jay [to Diane]: which partially exist to head off *law* being made about them

Diane nodnods.

MitchP says, "ASA code says info fomr public sources is not privacy-protectd"

Gray_Guest says, " Professional organizations have legal and practice sanctions for those who violate the ethical guidelines."

Coyote says, "[in response to luna] I'm not so sure — vr spaces have natural qualities that can not be legislated. Public is public You can say don't study us, but if something is in public it has little force— other than the loss of goodwill."

razey thinks we are back to the public/private debate

Dave says, "Every time one of us interjects a notion about the "practicality" or "pragmatics" or the "cost-effectiveness" of a research procedure, I think we're losing sight of the ethics of research"

VioletGuest says [about expansion], "Amy, you shouldsome of my students will be doing another take on MediaMOO"

Jay [to Coyote]: I'm not sure VR spaces are fundamentally different from "RL" spaces

Amy [to Violet_Guest]: cool!

BethK has disconnected.

mday nods. How do we decide, er, or who decides whether we're public?

Coyote says, "[to Jay] My point exactly."

RobtC thinks professional guidelines shjould be regarded as minimal requirements

Amy nods to mday

Dave [to Amy]: It's not braindead, actually. And copyright law is pretty clear about digitized material

Chartreuse_Guest [B@who

Diane [to Dave]: i was thinking, though, that we need to have guidelines for how to enforce/support our ethical guidelines, and for that, we need to anticipate the pragmatics,

razey agrees with Robtc

Tari [to Dave]: i suppose the trap we're falling into is that we don't know what standards we can hold people to unless we know what we can enforce

Violet_Guest says [about expansion], "We will be able to comparethe cognitive map from the previous study to the new one. LambdaMOO will also be another sujet MUD."

Amy [to Dave]: not braindead in all respects. Just most. :-)

Andrei [mday]: What is publicly (universally) accessible, is public.

Luna [to mday]: i think that the on-line community itself needs to decide, not the researcher, whether it is public or private

RobtC says [about logging], "laws have the advantage of being written by people whose interest is primarily protection of subjects rather than by a community of those who share the interests of researchers"

RobtC says, """"

Kristina says [about mday], "What about the creator of the virtual space setting whether it's public or not? Are there cases where there is no owner to set the ground rules?"

Tari says, "ethics are nice, but not everyone has them."

Bernie says, "Our presence in a moo is logged from the moment we connect in the .log file, many don't realise this before they connect to a moo"

mday [Andrei]: well then we are not public, since the vast majority of people have no computer and no telnet.
ergonomic-erratum [luna]: is the researcher always divorced from the on-line community?

Amy says, "we can still continue talking about issues raised in posts 214 and 215, but let's add issues in 216 to the mix. Everyone, please take a second to: @peek 216 on *research"

Jay [to RobtC]: but again, if the standards of the researchers aren't high enough, we get law

Coyote says, "While I think the on-line community has a voice, they do not get the final vote in my book."

lynn [to Kristina]: who's the "creator" in a mud that is built on by hundreds?

MitchP says, "ASA code says informed consent is necessary when risk of harm beyond that of everyday life is present"

Tari says, "so even though i know what i think is ethical, i want to know how i can enforce my ethics in a space that i'm responsible for."

mday thought mediamoo had decided, in some respects, that we are not completely public...?

Daniel [to Andrei]: I don't think so. I would not expect the same amount of privacy on the street as in a restaurant, even though anyone can go to either.

Amy [to Bernie]: usually it's not logged... unless they've written special logging software as I have for MOOSE

Amy [to Bernie]: or if the MOO crashes

Luna [to ergonomic-erratum]: good point, but there is a difference between internal critique of a community (which I think you are anxious to preserve) and external exposure.

Andrei [mday]: What is accessible in principle... for whoever has the desire to obtain the means.

Luna [to Coyote]: tell me more about why the on-line community can't get the final vote?

mday [Andrei]: gotcha, thanks.

Bernie nods to Amy "Not even your connection point, OK it's not a conversation, but a track of a connections movements"

Diane agrees with coyote.

Jay can write an expose of the Masons, but that's going to have consequences too

Turquoise_Guest has left.

Jay . o O (tentacled beings from the deep will eat me)

JaniceW materializes out of thin air.

Zachary materializes out of thin air.

Andrei [daniel]: But someone can take a photo of you on the street, and you cannot object... as paparazzi know so well

Gray_Guest says, " [To Amy] I like your point #4 about the importance of pseudonyms."

JaniceW waves hi

OchreGuest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Ochre_Guest.

mday likes 216 on "research at first glance.

JaniceW [to Andrei]: the difference is if someone tries to print that photo in a commercial publication

Violet_Guest says [about expansion], "gotta go go folks, thanks!"

Dave believes that the doctrines of most, if not all, professional organizations (i.e., APA, ASA, AAA) are shaped by legal considerations...especially the guidelines promulgated by federal funding agencies

Daniel imagines Amy's papers noting that 'all pseudonyms have been changed to protect the identity of the characters.'

Stu has disconnected.

Diane thinks amy's point 5 relates to coyote's point about last word.

Amy [to Gray_Guest]: thanks. I think a lot of people don't realize that the issue is not tracability to RL names necessarily, but the amount of time and emotional energy that people invest in their pseudonymous identities

ergonomic-erratum [luna]: isn't external exposure of promising or problematic behavior appropriate. And how do we determine the difference between internal and external when a journal readership may include many

MOO participants?

VioletGuest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Violet_Guest.

Andrei [JaniceW]: Yes, I agree... but then the fair use principle applies...

Guest materializes out of thin air.

Coyote says, "[to luna] because the issues may transcend the perspective of any one community. Sorry, that's a quick answer to a complex matter."

Amy chuckles at Daniel's remark

JaniceW owns her words no matter what name she writes them under....

The housekeeper arrives to cart BethK off to bed.

Identity says, "what about the name of the community, should a pseudonym be used in the final paper?"

Jay [to Amy]: Point 2 I think is really crucial. It says pretty clearly that "this is cyberspace, we can do anything!" is wrongheaded. And it means it's harder to snow your human subjects committee with technology.

Amy [to Identity]: I'd say yes if it's possible

mday [Identity]: that's a good point.

JaniceW [to Identity]: depends-sometimes that's what the "writer" prefers

Bernie . o O (anything ...mmmh!)

Lis~ot has disconnected.

RobtC likes everything but point 1

Amy [to Identity]: it's obviously not possible in my work on MOOSE Crossing. I could write about 'a large educational MUD which I happen to have designed' but that's not much help :-)

Identity says, "if the name is changed it make sit much harder for other researchers to compaire down the road"

Amy [to Identity]: but in most cases it is possible...

Tari likes amy's proposal because it offers a concrete to-do list

Diane [to RobtC]: what's wrong with familiarizing oneself with a code of ethics?

Ralph materializes out of thin air.

Tari says, "well, and i like what's on the list"

Coyote says, "I like Amy's second point, too."

lynn says, "has anyone here read the special issue of Information Society on ethics in cyber research?"

ergonomic-erratum says, "If everything becomes a pseudonym how can the research community examine and build on research. If I do analysis of architecture on MOOs do I need to change the name of the MOO or the owner and name of rooms?"

Amy says, "thanks everyone. I feel the whole thing is a touch vague, though. Is there more concrete stuff we should include?"

mday says, "OK, do explain why not point 1?"

Luna says [about logging], "i think all of Amy's points are good."

mday [lynn]: can you point us to it?

Tari says, "but mainly what amy's list shows is that despite the murk and haze of the surrounding ethical and legal issues it's possible to come up with reasonable concrete guidelines for researchers"

Jay says, "if it were really precise about everything, people would follow it to the letter"

Gray_Guest says, "Yes, the 2nd point is crucial. Although online communities differ from RL in many important ways, none of these differences are very relevant for treating community members differently in research."

mday [Amy]: it's a great start, in my mind.

lynn says, "Journal of the Infor. Soc, June 96 I believe"

Amy [to lynn]: I'd love to get together a web page with pointers and library reference info on this topic

Diane notes that amy's point 1 and lynn's point 1 are similar.

JanetC joins ya.

Lis~ot has connected.

lynn says, "Lynne's, you mean?"

JaniceW [to ergonomic-erratum]: I would recommend getting permission to do the research—and respecting people's wishes re: anonymity

Diane says, "sorry, lynne's."

mday says, "not webbed? Oh dear."

Amy [to Tari]: I don't think what I wrote was concrete at all!

Luisa materializes out of thin air.

ergonomic-erratum [amy]: a Bibliography or pointers to articles in this area would be very helpful.

MitchP waves to Luisa.

Amy nods to Lynn about having meant to type Lynne :-)

Polka_Dot_Guest says [about erickson cd], ""

Tari [to Amy]: concrete in the sense of here are things you can do, not in the sense of rigid'

Amy says, "well, if folks post stuff to *research, I'll compile it and put it on a web page"

Amy nods to Tari

JaniceW [to Tari]: Perhaps "guidelines" might be a better word?

lynn says, "there is one article in the Info. Soc. issue that states a basically postmodern perspective, suggesting you can't codify ethics guidelines for all online forums, you need to relativize for the community and type of forum"

Fuchsia_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Coyote says, "Hmmm... so you, Amy, are going to treat what we post to *res as public?"

Amy nods to Lynn. "Excellent point"

Diane chuckles.

razey feels that gives no protection to the research participants

ergonomic-erratum [Janice]: I could never submit my text to every MOO architecture programmer in order to get their permission to critique the way they construct things.

Amy [to Coyote]: no clue! Maybe we should talk about that!

Jay [to lynn]: which will no doubt be interpreted as license for people not really interested in this ethics crap

The housekeeper arrives to cart Stu off to bed.

Amy [to Coyote]: we started to discuss that way back when, and I'm not sure we ever got anywhere....

MitchP [to ergonomic-erratum]: and I don;t think you shold have to. is not quite the issue that usually comes up in ethical conundra

JaniceW [to ergonomic-erratum]: No, in that case you probably wouldn't need to—in a sense, the "public" stuff in MOOs is "published"—so you can cite it if you give credit properly

Ken says, "what?"

>;ctime()

=> "Mon Jan 20 16:00:33 1997 EST"

ergonomic-erratum says, "Do we ask characters for permission before we critique the system? No one likes criticism, any consideration of behavior or design would be eradicated."

>@whois

Player name Real Name Email Address

Fuchsia_Guest

Lis~ot Sue Thomas thomas@innotts.co.uk

Luisa Luisa Lamprea mar-lamp@uniandes.edu.co

RedGuest

Ralph Paul Kautz pek@ralph.rmwc.edu

Zachary Zachary DeAquila zachary@io.com

JaniceW Janice Walkerjwalker@chuma.cas.usf.edu

Guest

JanetC Janet Cross hceng028@huey.csun.edu

MitchP Mitch Pravatiner mapravat@prairienet.org

mday Michael J. Day mday@silver.sdsmt.edu

orbital Allen Manning Allen.Manning@plato.wadham.ox.ac.uk

Bernie Phil loughran loughrp@wmin.ac.uk

Hazel_Guest <204.32.155.98>

Mauve_Guest

Barry Barry Hayes bhayes@CS.Stanford.EDU

lynn Lynn Cherny cherny@csl.stanford.edu

Neon_Guest

paolo paolo petta paolo@oefai.ai.univie.ac.at

Polka_Dot_Guest

Ilene Ilene Frank ifrank@lib.usf.edu

Jay Jay Carlson nop@theory.cs.mankato.msus.edu

RobtC Bob Canary canary@cs.uwp.edu

Gray_Guest <165.134.100.189>

tina Tina Taylor ttaylor@binah.cc.brandeis.edu

Identity Keith Hampton khampton@chass.utoronto.ca

Green_Guest

Daniel Dan Rose rose@apple.com

PinkGuest <204.119.201.25>

Kristina IndigoGuest <149.80.1.177>

Chartreuse_Guest

razey TealGuest

Coyote Dave ergonomic-erratum Michele White WHI@cunyvmssl.gc.cuny.edu

Gold_Guest <128.18.20.108>

Scooter Austina M. Vainius austina@media.mit.edu

Xareth Edward Gray, Jr. gray@uhavax.hartford.edu

Kaisa SamH LurkingHorror Noel Germundson ael 17@freenet.carleton.ca

Andrei Andrej Skerlep andrei.skerlep@uni-lj.si

jaime Amy Bruckman asb@media.mit.edu

Amy Amy Bruckman asb@media-lab.media.mit.edu

Tari Tari Fanderclai tari@ucet.ufl.edu

Luna Diane Diane Maluso maluso@servtech.com

gandalfmichele michelotto michelotto@padova.infn.it

Ken says, "that depends on which MOO you're talking about JaniceW."

Tari [to JaniceW]: | You say, "but mainly what amy's list shows is that despite the murk and haze of the surrounding ethical and legal issues it's possible to come up with reasonable concrete guidelines for researchers" mday says, "but we've all been through relativization in the last few years on this moo, and some of us came to the conclusion that without some sort of policy set beforehand, and an agreement by the moocitizenry to hold to it, the relativity will defeat all efforts to be fair."

lynn [to Jay]: well, there are many opposing views in the issue, including positions saying 'it depends what you are studying' etc; but i admit i am concerned about writing up guidelines for all research online

Tari [to JaniceW]: guidelines would in fact be the word i used

JaniceW nods to Ken.

Jay [to lynn]: Me too, although Amy's point 2 tends to cut through the worst of the murk.

JaniceW [to Ken]: Always read the login screens :)

JaniceW [to Tari]: No—I didn't say that

Guest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Guest.

RobtC [to ergonomic-erratum]: Your position seems to be that the motives of the research (ie. critiquing the system) might affect the ethics of his/her behavior. Is that unfair?

JaniceW nods to Tari.

Xareth [amy]: how do we decide if *re is public? Does the whole moo have to vote?

JaniceW [to Tari]: Good word

lynn is not so sure declaring USEnet as "public" therefore means go ahead and quote private conversations on alt.sexual-abuse.recovery out of context etc

Amy [to Xareth]: no clue!

ergonomic-erratum [robtC]: the ethics of whose behavior?

PolkaDotGuest says [about erickson cd], ""

lynn says, "just as an example"

Dave [to JaniceW]: Not really. Citing it properly just means you aren't plagiarizing; you still have to get permission to use it. Otherwise, you're infringing someone's copyrighted expressions

Bernie is gonna leave and log this, but don't worry, all names will be protected

MitchP [to lynn]: important point there—usenet is not a momnoloth, nor are lists, kind of list in question must be considered

Amy [to Xareth]: I think it would be good if when you subscribed to a mailing list, you got a notice of the list's policies

Coyote says, "Amy's points 2,3, and 4 are, as far as I can tell, pretty standard practice for most reputable on-line researchers already. The people I worry about are the ones who are untrained in any research tradition or who don't think they are doing research — they think they are doing "literature" or something else."

Ken says, "how can you protect"

Andrei [coyote]: I believe that MOO mailing lists content is public, but is also copyrighted, so fair use applies

Ken says, "names when people are consantly refering to their own research?"

Xareth [amy]: agreed!

JaniceW [to lynn]: Yes, very murky there—I think it depends on how it's archived and accessed—but if possible, I would always ask permission

Amy [to Xareth]: we could write individual policies for each of our internal lists here

Bernie [to Ken]: By not using the information publicly, for private investigation

JaniceW [to Dave]: You don't need permission to quote a certain amount of published material—here or in print

lynn [to MitchP]: i guess altho i think people on usenet OUGHT to be aware that anyone can lurk and may be data mining or building profiles of them, they simply AREN'T expecting this necessarily and it's our business to worry about their expectations too

Dave [to Andrei]: Fair use does apply, but what constitutes fair use is problematic

Xareth [amy]: so will all new lists be forced to submit a policy with the si..list?

MitchP nods in agreement with Coyote

JaniceW nods to Andrei [GPC].

MitchP [to Coyote]: or "popular" journalists

Amy [to Xareth]: but this leaves the question open for me, people can still de facto violate those rules. So are we lulling people into a false sense of security by pretending to any sort of confidentiality

Jay [to Amy]: which is when the shunning starts

Ken [bernie]: How good is the security on the machine you plan to store this log?

MitchP [to Amy]: you may be right

JaniceW agrees with Dave—courts are still arguing fair use

Ken says, "or any log"

Andrei [dave]: That's decided form particular case to case... don't believe you can define a general blueprint...

Amy [to Xareth]: the alternative is to just declare them all open since they in a practical sense are

Amy doesn't know the right answer....

Bernie [to Ken]: I haven't lost anything yet...I er...believe....

Xareth [amy]: exactly, but then there is a basis for action, howevr severe that action may be

Jay says, "they're not open if misusing them has consequences"

Amy nods to Jay

Dave [to JaniceW]: That's true, but how much you quote is not that much...and, more to the point, it's not the amount but the importance of the material to the context from which you are quoting, not to your purpose

Diane [to Jay]: keep going?

ergonomic-erratum [Amy]: Even if ever academic researcher never quotes any text without permission, there would still be other characters/users who disclosed private communication.

Coyote says, "Security of records is an issue in many settings and probably is no more pressing for on-line reserch than other types."

Ken says, "Isn't it?"

JaniceW [to Dave]: Yes. Again, for things like usenet—I would ALWAYS ask permission of the author to use their words

Andrei [Dave]: My reservation of these otherwise excellent discussion is that it has a tendency to overregulate proposed ethical code...

Hazel_Guest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove HazelGuest.

Red_Guest materializes out of thin air.

Jay says, "in bad moods I'm tempted to add remarks to various MOO welcome screens saying "misuse of logs created without consent will get you redlisted and badmouthed to whatever RL people are appropriate.""

Xareth [amy]: ah...lists open only to characters...who have to sighn an agreement to join....it can get carried away!

Bernie says, "Shouldn't we ask ...what have we got to be afraid of if we treat all information as potetially more public than it should be...why worry?"

Amy nods to Andrei. "We all seem to lean way towards protecting research subjects. I wish someone here would speak a bit more on the other side of the argument"

Ken [to Jay]: I'm emptied even when I'm not in a bad mood.

Amy chuckles at Jay's comment

Polka_Dot_Guest says [about erickson cd], ""

Dave [to JaniceW]: In a book I published in which I quote 400 words from another author—less than 2 pages out of the 250 pages in his work, I had to request permission from his publisher (who held the copyright)

GrayGuest says, " What do you mean, Amy? "

Jay says, "the technology for cheap recording is there, whether people use it or not is up to social constraints"

RobtC says [about ethics], "People will violate any code of ethics or use—still worth having them—just as we have help manners"

Diane thinks Jay's on the right track, it's all about the consequences for having "bad" ethics.

Andrei [amy]: You made great points in 216. But I would say that the code should be at least in part understood as guidelines, not so much as obligatiory norms.

Luna says, ""

Jay says, "and if we just decide that we're powerless about people abusing this, we've effectively decided on a culture of logging"

Amy nods to Jay

Diane says, "or of using the logs."

Lis~ot says, "in response to amy's point about making the opposite argument..."

Bernie nods to jay

Diane says, "for anything other than thoughtful reflection"

ergonomic-erratum [Amy]: I feel like the irresponsible humanities academic, but I am concerned about the availability of these systems to consideration and critique.

RedGuest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Red_Guest.

Lis~ot says, "if i go out into the street and write down everything i see... do i need to get those peoples' permission?"

Lis~ot says, "in a sense a moo is just like an open street."

Amy [to ergonomic-erratum]: say more!

Jay [to Lis~ot]: some are

MitchP agrees with Lis

Jay [to Lis~ot]: some are like office buildings

Kristina nods to lis

Tari says, "some are like living rooms"

Bernie waves

Bernie listens

Dave did not begin his consideration of research ethics with legalities in mind, but in pursuing the issue of online speech/text, he was compelled to think about the relevance of copyright law

Niklas materializes out of thin air.

ergonomic-erratum [Amy]: I want to consider what types of logs we are talking about. I would differentiate between conversations between players, character descriptions, MOO mailing lists...

RobtC says [about ethics], "Moos are not like streets at all—they are textual spaces and that is relevant"

Lis~ot says, "that's true - the public vs private but if i as an author have dinner at your house and then write a story about it afterwards - is that ethical? authors do that kind of thing all the time"

Niklas sits down on the chair.

MitchP [to ergonomic-erratum]: good point that seems not to have been engaged before

Jay says, "people who generalize from their experience of the well-publicized open-admission Internet MUDs are gonna be in for a rude awakening at some point, as the technologies get more pervasive"

Luna nods to jay and Tari, Moos have various intentions, various degrees of openness

Diane says, "perhaps each moo needs to make clear what happens if administrators become aware of inappropriate use of any logs."

Tari [to Lis~of]: then i'll have you over for dinner again, and you'll be the main course!

Tari eyes herself warily.

MitchP grins at Tari.

Jay mmm, roasted author

Jay causes MitchP to fall down laughing.

Tari says, "with a nice chianti"

Amy says, "public space or not, I don't expect to have my conversation recorded by a researcher in a public space without being notified"

Dave agrees with RobtC and thinks that is the crucial issue here. Our data are not what people "say" (despite our use of speech metaphors) but rather what people *write*!

Lis~ot smiles at tari

Coyote says, "I know the two are linked, but I would like to keep the issues of researcher ethics and moo regulation separate."

JaniceW nods to Dave (copyrighted).

MitchP giggles at Tari.

Jay [to Amy]: yeah

RobtC doesn't think that the ethics of creative writers provide much of a model:)

MitchP [to Coyote]: good point often overlooked

MER [the Rhizomatic One] materializes out of thin air.

ergonomic-erratum [amy]: but what if i quoted from your description or from a room that you designed?

MitchP [to RobtC]: me neither

MER has disconnected.

Amy [to ergonomic-erratum]: I think that's a harder call

Jay [to ergonomic-erratum]: what if you quote from a poster Amy has up in her RL dining room?

Xareth says, "once the line of anonymity is crossed, there should be concent(consent)"

MitchP [to ergonomic-erratum]: I would not have a problem with that

Coyote says, "As I noted on *res, though, this medium is ambiguous with regard to its written character. Its oral text in my view."

Dave [to Coyote]: Oral text?

Luna [to ergonomic-erratum]: you can critique my description, but don't tell people my charater name

lynn would say it shares characteristics of both oral and written modes

MitchP [to Coyote]: this is true—not quite written communication, not quite oral

Lis~ot says, "but what is anonymity? that takes us back to the question of whether a character has a public reputation to protect"

MER has connected.

Gray_Guest says, "I would say that it is verbal behavior. Whether it is spoken or written is irrelevant (for our purposes here.)"

ergonomic-erratum [Jay]: then I would not feel any need to ask her permission. I might want to talk to her about what her reasoning was.

Amy nods to Jay. "It seems then to turn on whether the room is public or private space, and whether I'm a public or private figure"

MitchP says, "written speech is what it is"

RobtC sees Coyote's point but thinks it is carrying the pretence of moos too far

Coyote says, "Yes, that's what I mean."

Daniel says, "Journalists often relate private conversations — anyone ever read Metropolitan Diary in the New York Times?"

Neon_Guest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove NeonGuest.

Andrei [Amy]: S/he can record it, but not use it in published text word for word and going beyond the fair use.

ergonomic-erratum [luna]: if i quoted your description then people would know who you were...

Amy isn't sure fair use applies in this situation

Diane thinks Amy's point #4 deals with the anonymity issue in terms of names, at least.

Amy [to Diane]: can we broaden that point to other aspects?

Jay sure has a public reputation to protect if you talk about "Jay@JHM"

Diane says, "but names aren't the only identifier, sometimes someone sticks out for other reasons. "

Andrei [amy]: Fair use applies to published texts, and doesn't really matter from where the original quoted text comes.

Jay keeps on getting "Are you THE Jay? Of JaysHouseMOO?"

Dave [to Coyote]: Clearly, an issue here is whether we are dealing with speech or written text. I think it's more fuzzy than you do

Diane says, "like "a mooster who lives in a shopping cart said blah blah" would not make me happy."

RobtC [to Andrei]: Fair use applies to any text under copyright

Amy [to Andrei]: so is my virtual office a published text?

ergonomic-erratum says, "besides, when i critique something it is in hope that other users and other academics will take a look at hte sites that interest or trouble me."

lynn . o O (i'd just hate to be called 'a mooster')

Diane [to Amy]: only if you list it on your cv

Jay [to Amy]: what about a webcam in your real office?

Coyote says, "[to dave] No, I thinks its very fuzzy, too — that's my whole point."

Amy guesses that makes Jay a public figure, so he's fair game :-)

Jay nods solemnly to Amy.

Dave [to Amy]: Your written description of your virtual office is fixed and therefore subject to copyright

Amy blows steam out her ears at the mention of the Evil Webcam

Coyote sends an embarrassing photo of jay to Globe

Jay giggles

ergonomic-erratum says, "I think Dave is talking about the confusion VR between considering characters as

representations and considering them to be "selves" of course these terms overlap."

Andrei [robtC]: All recorded work by the author is automatically copyrighted, even his unpublished texts.

Amy has no idea why anyone would ever want to see what Steve Mann is seeing at any given moment

RobtC assumes, in fact, that Amy lists some of her moo creations on her CV

Jay [to Coyote]: please, not the one of me with the skinheads

Gray_Guest says, "Bye all. Next time I come here I won't be a guest!"

ergonomic-erratum says, "quote me so I can whine about it for years and years to come.."

JaniceW nods to ergonomic-erratum.

Gray_Guest has left.

Tari says, "are virtual places open to the survey of inanimate objects type of research?"

Coyote nods - yes, whining for years

Amy wonders about Tari's question, getting back to the issue of Peter's research

Jay says, "anyway, I bring up the webcam example because it leads to the question of whether, if you have a videoteleconference with Amy in her office, the picture of her office is now public"

MER has disconnected.

Diane [to Tari]: i remember getting asked if it was ok to use my place description for an artist's rl work.

Coyote says, "Great Q - Tari. You mean like the objects in my vr room?"

Jay says, "or heck, if you wander by the media lab and peer into the office...."

Niklas stands up from the chair.

Niklas disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

Andrei [jay]: But videoconference is probably not a public event.

Polka_Dot_Guest says [about erickson cd], "Why shou@more"

lynn says, "speaking of which, Jay, I had a similar worry when making an overhead for a talk with a picture of The Palace... conversations, gifs, etc; like taking a time slice of a MUD log"

Dave [to ergonomic-erratum]: I'm not talking about selves or representations of selves...I'm talking about whether or not online "speech" is written text. If it is, then behavior here, and research about it, is quite different from much of what social scientists research offline

Tari says, "which isn't usually a problem—by 'survey of inanimate objects' i mean, ir1, things like 'how many cars in the parking lot are red' and such."

Amy [to Jay]: I assume participants should know who is participating in a teleconference. If it's being broadcast, that's quite different from a few people participating

Jay [to Andrei]: and if Amy's VR office is locked, that's not public either, by extension

ergonomic-erratum says, "When I give a public presentation and I am videotaped I may not be happy about my representation but I am aware that it is part of the terms of a conference event..."

Andrei [Jay]: It's not publicly accessible, as MOOs are through institution of Guests.

Jay says, "a lot of MOOs don't have guests"

Amy oohs at Lynn's question. "Good question"

RobtC [to Andrei]: and we blacklist some

Andrei [Jay]: Then they are not public.

PolkaDotGuest says [about erickson cd], "I think a dividing point arises when you interact. The fly on the wall approach has a different set of responsibilities than does an observation approach"

Ken says, "a moo with guests is not necessarily public"

Amy says, "Beth wanted to ask about paraphrasing the content of conversations or lists. Is that any different from quoting?"

ergonomic-erratum [Dave]: MOO texts have usually been categorized as both speech and text...somewhere in between...

Andrei [Jay]: Principle of universal access is the principle of public space and events.

MitchP [to Amy]: I don't think so

Jay says, "anyway, a MOO with no guests but instant registration may be public"

Jay says, "concentrating on the "guest" issue is a sidetrack"

lynn [to Amy]: it is possibly worse, in that you may misrepresent in your paraphrase

Jay brbs

Andrei [Jay]: Instant registration will do ...

RobtC says [about rooms Are moo], "rooms" actually moo code—and if so, what is their status?"

Amy guesses it's often treated as less problematic. Whether or not that's right is another question

MitchP says, "Media is unusual in screening character requests (but having open guest admissions), most moos are fully public for all practical purposes"

Diane says, " i fparaphrasing, you usually cite your references, that adds to the complication."

Dave [to ergonomic-erratum]: I know how they've been categorized by linguists and others, but I was talking about the legal status of this material

lynn says, "altho context in which one discusses a verbatim quote can also misrepresent; and incidentally, this is something that consenting informants can't usually control, even in cases where they give permission to quote from their posts"

Coyote says, "Quoting, praraphrasing, hmmm-- for me, at least, the principle is to protect the respondent from identification and harm."

MitchP nods to Coyote.

Ken [to MitchP]: um, where are you getting "most" from? certainly many, but.

JaniceW nods to Diane.

Amy says, "there's an issue of to what extent I own my personal experiences. Paraphrasing is akin to a personal recollection...."

MitchP [to Ken]: Admittedly I am not conversant with many specialty moos

ergonomic-erratum [Dave]: The in MOO legal system, an international system, or local countries?

Ken says, "there are plenty of MOOs out there that are not public by any definition."

Coyote says, "[to dave] I don't think the legal status of this material has been decided. Look how many different types of material we have, even here on this moo."

Tari has found the Tuesday Cafe description in rather a lot of articles that she just kind of stumbled on. "in many cases, there's no mention of Netoric in general or me~the room owner and so, obviously, the writer of the description—in particular. Is that ethical?"

Ralph [to MitchP]: You would, by definition, be less aware of private muds.

JaniceW is publishing a moo ethnography in which the characters gave her different fictitious names to use for citation purposes

Amy [to Tari]: interesting question

lynn [to JaniceW]: who's your publisher?

The housekeeper arrives to cart MER off to bed.

Xareth [tari]: no, it's your work and you should be cited and informed

JaniceW [to Tari]: I'm trying to address that—but it's difficult for many people to figure out how to find out who owns a room—people should cite as much as they can ascertain, however

Andrei [amy]: Take paparazzi for example... famous persons being photographed in public places do not own their own experience

JaniceW [to lynn]: Well, mine's in a collection

Amy [to Andrei]: famous people are different

Amy [to Andrei]: and then you get into messy questions like: are LambdaMOO political figures 'public'?

RobtC [to JaniceW]: Not hard for anyone with a progbit to find an owner, really

Dave [to Amy]: Would a self-described "media icon" be a famous person?

Tari says, "what annoys me personally isn't that the description is copied without credite"

Andrei [Amy]: Not really... it's the question of public interest...

Polka_Dot_Guest says [about erickson cd], " {to amy} No they're not."

Ralph says, "Actually, Michael Douglas, in court, snowed that they aren't so different."

Tari says, "it's more that the same people who do that write all this really stupid wrong bogus junk about what the room is for"

JaniceW [to lynn]: Boynton-Cook-Heinemann

Coyote says, "[to Janice] Just make sure none of the people you quote include unchanged names of other chars or you might get harrassed for years— as we've seen :)"

JaniceW [to RobtC]: Yes, but not all researchers have prog bits, or characters

>;ctime()

=> "Mon Jan 20 16:22:20 1997 EST"

Amy says, "does the caller of a dispute on Lambda for instance become a public figure in the same way Anita Hill did?"

>@whois

Player name Real Name Email Address

razey Niklas Niklas Richardson nrich@plato.wadham.ox.ac.uk

Fuchsia_Guest

Lis~ot Sue Thomas thomas@innotts.co.uk

Luisa Luisa Lamprea mar-lamp@uniandes.edu.co

Ralph Paul Kautz pek@ralph.rmwc.edu

Zachary Zachary DeAquila zachary@io.com

JaniceW Janice Walkerjwalker@chuma.cas.usf.edu

JanetC Janet Cross hceng028@huey.csun.edu

MitchP Mitch Pravatiner mapravat@prairienet.org

mday Michael J. Day mday@silver.sdsmt.edu

orbital Allen Manning Allen.Manning@plato.wadham.ox.ac.uk

Bernie Phil loughran loughrp@wmin.ac.uk

MauveGuest

Barry Barry Hayes bhayes@CS.Stanford.EDU

lynn Lynn Cherny cherny@csli.stanford.edu

paolo paolo petta paolo@oefai.ai.univie.ac.at

Polka_Dot_Guest

Ilene Ilene Frank ifrank@lib.usf.edu

Jay Jay Carlson nop@theory.cs.mankato.msus.edu

RobtC Bob Canary canary@cs.uwp.edu

GrayGuest <165.134.100.189>

tina Tina Taylor ttaylor@binah.cc.brandeis.edu

Identity Keith Hampton khampton@chass.utoronto.ca

Green_Guest

Daniel Dan Rose rose@apple.com

PinkGuest <204.119.201.25>

Kristina Indigo_Guest <149.80.1.177>

Chartreuse_Guest

Teal_Guest

Coyote Dave ergonomic-erratum Michele White WHI@cunyvmsl.gc.cuny.edu

Gold_Guest <128.18.20.108>

Scooter Austina M. Vainius austina@media.mit.edu

Xareth Edward Gray, Jr. gray@uhavax.hartford.edu

Kaisa SamH LurkingHorror Noel Germundson aell7@freenet.carleton.ca

Andrei Andrej Skerlep andrej.skerlep@uni-lj.si

jaime Amy Bruckman asb@media.mit.edu

Amy Amy Bruckman asb@media-lab.media.mit.edu

Tari Tari Fanderclai tari@ucet.ufl.edu

Luna Diane Diane Maluso maluso@servtech.com

gandalfmichele michelotto michelotto@padova.infh.it

Luna [to Tari]: i'm sympathetic to what you say. while - I - might be willing to let argo post my description for a critiqu without my name, there are other times when I'd like the hard work of creation acknowledged.

RobtC says [about ethics], "Given how very marginal moos are and how small the moo world really is, I'd think not"

JaniceW [to Tari]: They SHOULD at least credit the address at the very least, and the room # and name—which are easy. Beyond that, if possible—I STRONGLY encourage doing @exam to find the room "owner" to cite as author

lynn says, "maybe public *relative* to LambdaMOO's notions of public and private spaces"

Andrei [Amy]: Yes, I believe s/he becomes public... s/he is doing a public petition.

JaniceW smiles at Coyote.

ergonomic-erratum [Amy]: are you suggesting that Sunny or Samlam is a public figure and thus quoting them doesn't require permission?

Tari [to Luna]: i guess i think if they had to ask me or gregs about it printing the description, it would give us a chance to say 'what are you saying about the netoric project and have you actually read the page'

Xareth says, "public within the context of LambdaMoo"

JaniceW [to Coyote]: I made it clear it's fictitious—and a fictitious moo name—and I have permissions anyway from all of the characters involved

Coyote says, "[amy] yes, I think so — a little public, but public."

Amy [to ergonomic-erratum]: I don't have an answer, but yes—that's the question

Luna [to JaniceW]: the problem is that not all moo creators want credit, and not all want to be anonymous

Andrei [xareth]: And Lambda MOO is public space, 'cause it's universally accessible through guests.

Ralph [to Amy]: It depends on the process. On Lambda, it's supposed to be an open discussion, isn't it?

PinkGuest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove PinkGuest.

Diane says, "it strikes me that some responsibility is with the reader of the moo research/critique. "

Luna [to Tari]: good point

Coyote says, "Yes, luna is right."

Amy says, "well, we should wrap this up in a couple minutes."

ergonomic-erratum [Amy]: I don't think Sunny would be very happy with that.

mday says, "then the question arises about how much privacy public figures are to be given. Sounds like an oxymoron, I know..."

JaniceW [to Luna]: That's why I ask permission whenever possible—but there IS a difference between "public" and "private" in most MOOs—public as published, and private needed consent—I even checked with the wiz at the moo i did this at for their policy on this

Amy says, "I'd like to ask everyone to suggest what they think is a key unresolved issue"

Diane says, "when i read research in any field i judge it's merit on a variety of factors, including what i think of the ethics."

RobtC says [about public figures], "Being a public figure in the Lambda context hardly makes one a public figure for legal purposes"

Andrei [mday]: It has to be decided from case to case.

Tari [to JaniceW]: the only problem there is what if the room/object owner doesn't want to be mentioned and you think you're doing the right thing by naming 'em

Amy [to RobtC]: unless someone's writing an article about Lambda politics....

Diane [to Amy]: character's expectations of anonymity

RobtC [to Amy]: Even then, I'd think pseudonyms would be in order—why not use them?

Jay returns with more caffeine and more hardcore german techno

Xareth [amy]: anonymity whether in a public or private ml space

JaniceW [to Tari]: Depends on if it's a public or private room—if possible—I DO contend this is a publishing space—and therefore can be cited—and the author's alias should be used unless you have permission to use the "rl" name

Polka_Dot_Guest says [about erickson cd], "What is public. What is private? Where and how can the two be separated. This underlies the discussion. "

Coyote says, "For me, the key unresolved issue is the matter of the ethical standards surrounding moobehavior. That is, do we treat moobehavior by the same ethical standards that we would treat rl behavior."

Luna [to Amy]: determining the community's own standards for ethical research, and whether the researcher should be concerned or not.

Dave [to Amy]: One unresolved issue is the applicability of copyright law to a text-based virtual community...

lynn says, "determination of what's public/private, who determines it for a given forum, what this means operationally in terms of decisions about giving credit with citation, protecting informants (even when they think they don't need it)"

Xareth [amy]: ah vl...

ergonomic-erratum says, "I think we need to address what type of quotation we are talking about rather than attempting to make a universal code of ethics. I find that kind of legislation oppressive."

mday [andrei]: then it's very difficult to develop policies beforehand, is it not? And everyone gets treated differently. I wonder if it's fair, or whether fairness, in a relative world, is even possible

Ken [to Coyote]: why are you differentiating between "moobehavior" and "rl behavior" Aren't they both just behavior?

Dave [to any]: Another is the criteria for distinguishing between "public" and "private" in moo environments

JaniceW nods to Dave (copyrighted).

JoeW materializes out of thin air.

Coyote says, "[ken] not in my book, but as I say, I think the issue is ambiguous."

Kaisa has disconnected.

ergonomic-erratum [Janice]: but using an alias here is like using my name which can easily be accessed with an alias...

MitchP waves to JoeW.

Andrei [dave]: You don't apply copyright law to Virtual Community, but to the problems arising from publishing texts, that use quotes from VR

JaniceW nods to ergonomic-erratum.

Amy says, "Well, I'd like to thank everyone for a TERRIFIC session"

MitchP smiles at Amy.

Diane [to Amy]: thanks for setting this up.

JaniceW [to ergonomic-erratum]: Here there is a strict message (at tues cafe anyway)—that researchers need to get permission before quoting

Amy says, "I've really enjoyed this, and I'd like thank you all for coming"

Jay says, "'moo behavior' is just behavior mediated by technology, there are still real people at all the endpoints."

Barry says, "You're welcome"

Dave [to Andrei]: I think you are misinformed about the applicability of the law to cmc

Amy says, "I hope we can continue this kind of productive discussion on the "research list, and in other forums"

JaniceW [to JaniceW]: Not sure I agree with it—it's public and therefore publishable—but I DO abide by it

mday says, "when is the next session or the ball? Thanks, Amy!"

Polka_Dot_Guest says [about erickson cd], "Thanks."

ergonomic-erratum [amy]: thanks from organizing the conference.

Andrei [dave]: OK, can be.

Coyote says, "Thanks everyone."

Amy says, "As most of you know, today is MediaMOO's fourth birthday!"

LurkingHorror disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

lynn thinks she may post on *res now that this event is over :)

JaniceW [to Amy]: GREAT topic!

Teal_Guest has disconnected.

The housekeeper arrives to remove Teal_Guest.

Dave [to Amy]: Happy Birthday!:)

mday says, "Happy Birthday to us!"

Luna says, "great session, folks. Great job formatting and moderating, Amy."

Amy says, "We formally opened on January 20th, 1993 on the day of Bill Clinton's first inauguration with the MediaMOO inaugural ball"

RobtC cheers for Amy

Amy says, "I'd like to invite you all to come celebrate now"

RobtC looks for the official MediaMoo Inaugural souvenirs

LurkingHorror materializes out of thin air.

Amy says, "please come to the ballroom for our annual anniversary ball!"

JaniceW puts on her best fancy-dress toes.

LurkingHorror disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

Chartreuse_Guest [B[C]thanks for lettimg me sit in...

Dave wonders if MediaMOO is a FOB?:)

Amy says, "there are virtual drinks, costumes, dancing, and a card to sign"

Andrei [Amy]: I bet MediaMOO will outlast Clinton as president...

mday [The Cognomial] disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

Coyote waves

Coyote goes home.

Amy says, "to get there, type: @go ballroom foyer"

Amy says, "and don't forget to dress!"

Ilene disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

JaniceW disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

JoeW disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

Daniel goes home.

tina leaves to take care of the few things before joining the party

SamH disappears suddenly for parts unknown.

Amy [to Andrei]: thanks! I hope so too