If the topic of ICT Ethics and Security in the 21st century is about anything at all, surely it is about change and all the challenges associated with change. To quote Italian philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli, “it must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things.” Yet 500 years on, although technology has advanced in unimaginable ways since Machiavelli, we still wrestle with the same intrinsic challenges of how to change the “order of things.” We might justifiably ask what we really know about change, and in particular, what we know about making changes in the context of ICT ethics and security. Can we measure change? If so, what unit of measurement do we use? Productivity, compliance, user satisfaction, ethical acceptability? All of them?

However, we have learnt some things about ICT ethics and security. For instance, we know that introducing new technologies is likely to lead to changed behaviors either positive or negative, changes in legislation eventually, opportunities for those who would subvert the law, if not ethical values, and so on. We might also reflect on what we know about the preferred types of vehicle we choose to facilitate or mandate change. Traditionally, we have used strategies such as legislation, policy, standards, computerized business rules, as well as more socially oriented approaches, such as training and engagement tactics. But are these effective strategies, how viable are they in the long term, how far away are we from realizing the goal of controlling change in ICT security, and what role can ethics play in determining change for the good of all parties concerned?

ICT Ethics and Security in the 21st Century: New Developments and Applications has three sections, the first of which deals with online ethics. In the five years since Dr Quigley published her last book in this area, there have been many new developments in the online world. For example, with Web 2.0, we are really only now beginning to understand the implications of this way of interacting via the Web. Already, this has had a profound effect on many of us in terms of how we communicate with those around us, not least the younger among us, and so it is vitally important that the scientific community research and report on this significant area of change. In this section, we look at scientific research and discussion on virtual communities, social networking, plagiarism, and copyright.

Section two deals with ethical concerns in health and safety. The health arena is an obvious area in which the dual challenges of ethics and security come to the fore. For example, whilst we all quite rightly put great trust in our doctors and nurses to make appropriate medical decisions and evaluations on our behalf, are we equally justified in assuming that their computer knowledge is mature enough to safeguard and maintain our health information? This section also reports on how mobile/wireless technology is revolutionizing how health information is shared and how safety outcomes can be improved.
In the last section, ethics and security in organizations is examined. Organizations face challenges across the whole spectrum of issues in ICT ethics and security, and so in the section, we observe a maturing environment in which innovations in employee surveillance, ethical policy writing, standards, virtualization, computerized rules, and critical infrastructure are impacting the business.

This book explores current topics in ICT ethics and security that demonstrate both the challenges and the progress being made in this ever pervasive world of change that we live in. Each chapter is a snapshot of work being done in a particular area. Individually, they describe state of the art research being conducted in a specific domain; collectively, they start to address those intrinsic challenges of how to “change the order of things.” Never before have such challenges been more immediate or consequential. ICT Ethics and Security in the 21st Century: New Developments and Applications is required reading for those seriously interested in how ICT is affecting us all.

Donald C. McDermid
August 2010

Donald C. McDermid, BSc (hons) Comp Sc, Dip Adult Ed, MBA, PhD is an Associate Professor at the School of Computer and Security Science, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. Donald has published over 40 academic papers in journals and at conferences and two books including a recent book on ICT ethics. His research interests are in the area of governance and change management—particularly in how IT can support change in health, where, compared to other sectors, change has been relatively slow to be embraced. A member of the Australian Computer Society and a committee member of the Health Informatics Society of Australia, he is passionate about raising the reputation of the ICT profession in Australia.

REFERENCES