

# Preface

Understanding, appreciating and taking corrective steps to maintain and enhance social responsibility in the information age is important not only because of our increased dependence on information and communication technologies, but also because information and communication technologies pose complex challenges, which had a lesser significance in an earlier period. Although we have always acknowledged that increased awareness of social responsibility issues in the information age is essential, there has only been a sketchy review of the concerns and the inherent challenges. This edited book is a first step in bringing together various viewpoints from around the world and in presenting a coherent argument.

Given the technological advances and sensationalistic exposes of irresponsible handling of information, businesses have begun to act with caution. Today some companies have even appointed chief privacy officers and their likes to develop policies and programs to facilitate social responsibility in the information age. In companies such as IBM, AT&T and Eastman Kodak, such individuals have been involved in studying and assessing privacy risks ensuing from all operations, developing privacy codes of practice, interacting with concerned regulators and consumers, and conducting privacy reviews and audits of all products and Internet services. Although chief privacy officers are a new breed of executives which some of the socially conscious companies have appointed, they are as yet in a minority. A report in *The New York Times* estimated such individuals at about 100 in the United States, with expectations that the numbers will increase to 1,000 within a year (*The New York Times*, February 12, 2001). The trend is however positive. The new role offers a contact point for consumers and a responsible individual within a company.

Clearly the issue of social responsibility in the information age is an important one and it's my hope that the collection of papers by eminent scholars in the field will help in enhancing our understanding of a topic area that is in its infancy. In order to maintain the quality of the chapters, all contributions in this book were double-blind reviewed. Many of the authors also served as reviewers. I acknowledge their help in maintaining high standards and helping in the advancement of knowledge. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the College of Business, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and numerous graduate students who have engaged in fruitful debates. This book would not have been possible without the support of my family. My parents played a significant role in making me socially aware and responsible and I wish my father could have seen the result. I dedicate this book to his loving memory. My wife rendered a lot of encouragement and provided support at every step in the completion of this book. I acknowledge her patience and support most sincerely.