

Review:

Maria Bottis and Eugenia Alexandropoulou (eds.): Broadening the Horizons of Information Law and Ethics: A Time for Inclusion.

Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Information Law and Ethics (ICIL 2016). Edited by Maria Bottis and Eugenia Alexandropoulou (University of Macedonia Press, 2017; viii + 497 pages. ISBN: 978-618-5196-25-7).

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This edited volume is comprised of twenty-nine papers originally presented at the Seventh International Conference on Information Law and Ethics (ICIL 2016) at the University of Pretoria (South Africa), February 22–23, 2016. (It is perhaps worth noting that the ICIL conference series began in 2008, when Maria Bottis directed the first ICIL seminar at the Ionian Academy in Corfu, Greece.) The present volume is organized into eight main sections or parts: I. Keynotes; II. Freedom of Information and Expression; III. Privacy–Data Protection; IV. Intellectual Property; V. E–Commerce; VI. Government/E–Health; VII. Law/Justice and Information Technology; and VIII. Ethics. Sections II and IV are also further divided into two subsections: “IIa. Theory” and “IIb. Specific Issues”; and “IVa. Theory” and “IVb. Patents”, respectively.

Many of the papers included in this volume specifically address the two key themes, or motifs, identified in the title of the ICIL 2016 Proceedings: “Broadening the Horizons of Information Law and Ethics”, and “A Time for Inclusion.” For example, the separate sections on e–commerce and e–health include papers that expand on some of the more traditional categories of ethical/legal concerns examined in previous ICIL proceedings; so, papers in these sections clearly serve to “broaden” the range and scope of issues examined at earlier ICIL conferences. And the two keynote papers in Section I, by Rafael Capurro and Paul Sturges, as well as papers in Section VII by Nneki Obiamaka, et al. and Ludovica Poli, each address key aspects of the of the “time for inclusion” theme. At the same time, however, many of the papers in this volume also address IT–ethics/law–related concerns involving specific nation states – e.g., issues directly affecting Greece, Kenya, Nigeria, Namibia, Poland, South Africa, and Tanzania. So, in this sense, the edited volume is nicely balanced between papers addressing concerns affecting the local and the global.

One virtue of this edited volume is apparent in the diverse range of topics that are thoughtfully examined by the individual contributors. Because of space limitations, however, it would not be possible for the present reviewer to comment critically on each paper. So I will limit my further analysis to two articles that, from this reviewer’s perspective, are particularly noteworthy: Julian Hauser’s “Sharing is Caring vs. Stealing is Wrong: A Moral Argument for Limiting Copyright Protection”; and Nikos Koutras’s “The Concept of Intellectual Property: From Plato’s Views to Current Copyright Protection in the Light of Open Access”. Both articles approach their subject – in this case, intellectual property rights – from a highly theoretical perspective. (Admittedly, my decision to call attention to these two papers may indeed reveal my bias as a philosopher who tends to embrace “the theoretical”, realizing all the while the critical importance of the practical/applied side of information law/ethics as well.) Whereas Hauser’s paper nicely analyzes “authorial interests” vs. “public interests” against the backdrop of Lockean and personality–theory frameworks of property, Koutras traces some concepts of property and arguments for property rights from Plato and Aristotle to Locke and Hegel. Both authors show the significant impact that these highly–influential historical thinkers have had in the evolution of some contemporary frameworks that have been employed in the ongoing, and arguably contentious, intellectual–property–rights debate in the digital age.

Many readers will likely be impressed by the manner in which this handsome volume is so thoughtfully organized, and I suspect that many readers will also be struck by the quality of its content. I also believe that this edited volume of conference papers, as in the case of the six earlier ICIL Proceedings, continues to contribute significantly to the growing literature in the field of information law/ethics. In an era when many conference proceedings now appear to be compiled with little-to-no thought given to themes and organizing principles for arranging the content, Bottis and Alexandropoulou's superb volume should be applauded.