Committee on Philosophy and Computers

2014-2015 Membership

Thomas Powers, chair (2016)
    Colin Allen (2017)
    Fritz Allhoff (2016)
    Jeffrey Coombs (2016)
    Felmon Davis (2015)
    John Sullins III (2015)

Piotr Boltuc, newsletter editor
Chair: Thomas M. Powers (2016)

Associate Chair: Marcello Guarini (2019)

Members: Colin Allen (2017)
          Fritz Allhoff (2016)
          Jeffrey S. Coombs (2016)
          Stefano Franchi (2018)
          Fritz J. McDonald (2018)

Newsletter: Editor Piotr Boltuc
            Guest Editor John P. Sullins III
New Additions to the Committee

The APA Committee on Philosophy and Computers welcomed new members Stefano Franchi (Texas A&M) and Fritz J McDonald (Oakland University) and a new Associate Chair, Marcello Guarini of the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada. Professor Guarini is very well suited to contribute to and direct the CPC; he has served as the Executive Director of the International Association for Computing and Philosophy (IACAP) and has provided leadership for the “philosophy and computers” community North America and overseas. He has been active in the APA as well as in the Canadian Philosophical Association and in the Philosophy of Science Association. With Marcello’s leadership the CPC is poised to remain strong.

Collaborations

The APA CPC has pursued collaborations with kindred organizations and is now better connected to the international community. Philosophers in the International Association for Computing and Philosophy (IACAP) are made aware of CPC activities and Division Meeting panels through listservs and other forms of information sharing. In June of 2015 the CPC sponsored a reception during the first joint international conference of IACAP and Computer Ethics: Philosophical Enquiry (CEPE), a society sponsored by the International Society for Ethics and Information Technology. The conference took place from June 22-25 at the University of Delaware in Newark. UD’s Center for Science, Ethics & Public Policy was also a co-sponsor the conference.

Barwise Prize awarded to Helen Nissenbaum

Helen Nissenbaum of New York University was awarded the 2014 Barwise Prize by the CPC. Nissenbaum is Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication, and of Computer Science, as well as Director of the Information Law Institute at NYU. The author or editor of five books and many articles, she has been widely recognized for her work on digital privacy and has influenced U.S. policy on privacy at the federal level.1 Professor Nissenbaum accepted the Barwise Prize at the 2014 Eastern Division Meeting.

APA Eastern Division and Pacific Division Panels

The planned session at the 2014 Eastern Division meeting was originally to focus on the work of Luciano Floridi (Oxford), but Professor Floridi was unable to attend the meeting. Given the circumstances, the CPC worked hard to put together a panel on The Philosophy of Information. The speakers were Colin Allen (Indiana University) on "Meaning, Minds, and Models"; John Symons (Kansas University) on “The Limits of Information Processing in Software Intensive Science”; Darren

1 See http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/03/the-philosopher-whose-fingerprints-are-all-over-the-ftcs-new-approach-to-privacy/254365/
Abramson (Dalhousie University) on "Floridi’s Fourth Revolution"; and Thomas M. Powers (University of Delaware) on “Information Justice”. At the 2015 Pacific Division meeting in Vancouver, the CPC organized a session to highlight the work of the 2013 Barwise Prize winner, Colin Allen, of Indiana University. The session was titled “Colin Allen on machine ethics and dynamic ontology.” Allen’s work has served as a bridge between research on machine ethics, cognition, computation, and ontology, and this panel explored his many contributions to these fields. The speakers were Peter Danielson, (University of British Columbia) on "Robot Ethics: Dogs & New Equilibria"; Thomas M. Powers (University of Delaware) on “Top-down approaches to machine ethics”; and Barry Smith (SUNY-Buffalo) on “How to build an ontology.” Each of the critical talks was followed by a response by Allen.

The APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers

The Newsletter continues under the editorship of Piotr Boltuc, the Louise Hartman Schewe and Karl Schewe Professor in Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois, Springfield. In 2014 Piotr took a much-deserved sabbatical, with travels and lectures in Australia, so John Sullins agreed to step in as Guest Editor of the Newsletter. John’s assistance with the Newsletter was crucial for a quite important and sad task: arranging an issue to commemorate the life of the first recipient of the Barwise Prize (2002), Patrick Suppes, who passed late in 2014. This special issue featured a previously unpublished autobiography by Suppes, as well as tributes to a scholar who had a tremendous impact on the “philosophy and computers” community. He will be missed.

For the Committee on Philosophy and Computers

Thomas M. Powers, Chair
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University of Delaware