Committee on Philosophy and Computers

2013-2014 Membership

Thomas Powers, chair (2016)
  Fritz Allhoff (2016)
  Jeffrey Coombs (2016)
  Felmon Davis (2015)
  John Sullins III (2015)
  Dylan Wittkower (2014)
  Robin Zebrowski (2014)

Piotr Boltuc, newsletter editor
APA Committee on Philosophy and Computers
Annual report 2014

Chair: Thomas M. Powers (2016)

Members: Colin Allen (2017)
         Fritz Allhoff (2016)
         David Bourget (2017)
         Jeffrey S. Coombs (2016)
         Felmon J. Davis (2015)
         John P. Sullins III (2015)

Newsletter Editor: Piotr Boltuc
Joint Work of the Committee

Many contemporary issues in higher education are related to the significant and growing influence of computer and information technologies on our lives as professional academics. The consideration of such issues lies within the broad charge of the Committee on Philosophy and Computers (CPC). Spurred on by two members, Dylan E. Wittkower and Felmon Davis, our committee has considered two issues of particular importance: massive open online courses (MOOCs) and open-access journals. In both cases Dylan and Felmon drafted white papers and responded to numerous critiques and suggestions by the other members of the CPC. The first paper was published in the APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers as “Statement on Open-Access Publication” by Dylan E. Wittkower (Spring 2014, 13:2, pp. 11-12); the latter paper will appear in the Newsletter in the Fall of 2014 as “Statement on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)” by Felmon Davis and Dylan E. Wittkower. The CPC would like to thank Dylan and Felmon for their extraordinary efforts, and to recommend both of these articles to the broader philosophical community.

Ties to Kindred Organizations

The APA CPC is focused on the interface between philosophy and computation; it is not the only professional body to have this focus. Especially in Europe, organizations have come into existence and maintained high levels of activity by supporting the philosophical inquiry into many aspects of the philosophy/computation interface. Some collaboration and cross-fertilization between the CPC and these other organizations is highly desirable. Beginning in 2013, the chair sought closer ties to these organizations. This initiative has born fruit; philosophers active in the International Association for Computing and Philosophy (IACAP) have joined the CPC and contributed to the Newsletter. And in June of 2015, the CPC will co-sponsor the first joint international conference of Computer Ethics: Philosophical Enquiry (CEPE)—sponsored by the International Society for Ethics and Information Technology—and IACAP. The conference will take place from June 22-25 at the Clayton Conference Center of the University of Delaware in Newark. UD’s Center for Science, Ethics & Public Policy will also co-sponsor the conference.

Barwise Prize awarded to Colin Allen

Colin Allen, Provost Professor of Cognitive Science and History & Philosophy of Science at Indiana University, was named the 2013 recipient of the Barwise Prize. He has made substantial contributions over a range of areas related to philosophy and computers, from computer ethics to cognitive science to doing philosophy by means of computers. He has played a leading role in the scholarship on machine ethics, and (with Wendell Wallach) co-authored Moral Machines: Teaching Robots Right from Wrong (Oxford: 2009). Colin joined the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) in 1998 as a programmer and main consultant and is currently the
Associate Editor. Colin has played a major role in SEP’s development. He has also been and continues to be an active member of the computers and philosophy movement, both in the APA and IACAP. In the summer of 2014 Colin joined the CPC as a member. A panel on that portion of Colin’s work most relevant to computation is being planned for the 2015 Pacific Division Meeting in Vancouver.

*APA Eastern Division Panel on the work of Luciano Floridi*

In the last decade, Luciano Floridi has produced a body of work on many aspects of information technology, and this work has been highly influential across several fields. He is currently Professor of Philosophy and Ethics of Information at the University of Oxford. At the Eastern Division Meeting in Philadelphia, Floridi’s work will be examined by a panel of critics. The panel includes talks by Darren Abramson (Dalhousie University) “Floridi’s Fourth Revolution”; Colin Allen (Indiana University) “Uncertainty about Information; Thomas M. Powers (University of Delaware) “Mindless, Distributed Morality”; John Symons (Kansas University)”Patterns, Information, and Ontology”; and in response, Luciano Floridi (University of Oxford, United Kingdom).

*The APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers*

The *Newsletter* continues under the editorship of Piotr Boltuc. Piotr’s long service to the CPC, the APA, and the profession of philosophy has benefitted us all. The *Newsletter* is consistently well-organized, and the contributions are intellectually serious and timely. In recognition of his scholarly achievements and his contributions to his university and the profession, in May of 2013 Piotr was named the Louise Hartman Schewe and Karl Schewe Professor in Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois, Springfield. The CPC is very lucky to have his talents at our disposal.

For the Committee on Philosophy and Computers

Thomas M. Powers, Chair
Department of Philosophy
University of Delaware