



The Emerging Profession of Software Engineering

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Since the term “software engineering” was coined at a NATO conference in 1968, the field of software engineering has slowly matured and evolved into a recognized profession. The need for carefully crafted software is becoming more and more evident and the principles of software engineering are slowly being learned, codified, taught and practiced. Various infrastructure elements have been established, such as standards, a body of knowledge, model academic curricula, a code of ethics, accreditation and certification mechanisms, and so forth. On the near horizon there are prospects for establishing professional licensing, reference curricula, and international standards.

Yet there is still considerable debate about exactly what software engineering is, whether it is best classified as a form of engineering or as something else, and whether it is, could be, or should be considered a true profession.

This talk examines the arguments for and against the professionalism of software engineering, summarizes the state of software engineering today, reviews activities currently under way to strengthen the professional infrastructure, and discusses some of the good and bad results of recent attempts to establish software engineering as a disciplined, engineering field.