

EXHIBIT 8



Article 5 of 6

Financial

NETWORKINGS

Ideas Whose Time for Free Access Has Come

John Schwartz

06/29/1998

The Washington Post

FINAL

Page F20

Copyright 1998, The Washington Post Co. All Rights Reserved

If the World Wide Web could be felt and not just merely surfed, you'd be feeling a very big rumble in August. That's when technicians will begin connecting one of the largest single databases ever offered on the Web. It's the official record of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO).

How big a deal is this? Bruce A. Lehman, commissioner of patents and trademarks, put it to me this way: "This database is the record of technology at this moment in time."

If some unimaginable holocaust were to zap the United States, he said, survivors could pull the PTO's backup tapes out of the Pennsylvania salt mine where they're stored and "entirely reproduce all of the technology of the 20th century." And now, he continued, "we are putting the entire library of the technology of our time on the Web, available with a few keystrokes."

If you're not impressed yet, you just might need to have another cup of coffee.

But before we say more about this new stuff, let's build up to it by discussing some very old stuff.

You might think this is a nation built of laws, or of power, or of money. But it's also a nation of ideas. This whole country, as Abraham Lincoln said at Gettysburg, was invented because of a "proposition": the once-crazy notion "that all men are created equal." To ensure the survival of the marketplace of ideas that helped them create the structure of the new government, the Founding Fathers made freedom of speech the Constitution's first amendment.

Just as important, they enshrined within that Constitution the notion of protection for ideas that might make people money through a system of patents and copyrights. There it is, right there in Article 1, Section 8: Congress shall have the power "to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries."

Jefferson, Franklin and many other prominent Americans present at the birth of the republic were scientists and inventors on the side. They knew the power -- and profit -- that can come from an idea. But like all of the great notions at the core of our nation, the system of patents and copyrights they envisioned was a delicate balancing act: On the one hand, the person who comes up with ideas deserves a degree of protection. On the other, those ideas become infinitely more powerful when shared and built upon.

All right. Now let's click forward a couple of hundred years and many millions of patents later. I was sitting at my desk when the phone bleated its electronic tone. I picked it up and heard the unmistakably impish voice of Carl Malamud, one of the Internet's more provocative guys.

Malamud believes that government information belongs to all the people and ought to be freely available on the Web. He is on one side of a long-standing tug of war with companies that profit by packaging government information and reselling it to businesses and consumers.

Through his Internet Multicasting Service, he has had a hand in pushing an incredible amount of such information into the ether, most notably filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Election Commission and the Government Printing Office. He's often helped force those government agencies to take over and improve the online operations. So whenever Carl calls, I figure I'm in for a pretty interesting

ride.

This time he had his sights set on patents, one of the biggest kahunas out there. They've long been available by mail and at one of 70 national patent libraries, but he was agitating to get them online. He was calling me to say he was fed up with waiting. After Malamud made his frustration known through the New York Times, a Washington-area Internet entrepreneur anonymously ponied up \$500,000 and told Malamud that he should just do what big business does and buy the patent information himself -- and then give it away.

Malamud started working round the clock and began quietly telling journalists that his bare-bones patent Web site would open its virtual doors on July Fourth.

Then last Thursday, Commissioner Lehman made his announcement. First will come trademark text libraries, in August, followed by trademark images and patent text in November. Patent images will begin appearing in March 1999. The full text of the 2 million patents dating back to 1976, along with trademarks from the 1800s onward, will be online, Lehman said, joining 20 years of patent abstracts and full AIDS-related patent databases that his office already makes available online.

That will be the start, the patent office says. The grand aspiration: that one day every single patent going all the way back to the beginning will be online.

The new databases will be searchable by key word -- a crucial feature that Malamud had no plans to provide since he assumed others would jump in to fashion innovative tools for exploring the trove. "For the first time in history," Lehman told me, "patent info will really satisfy the intent of the Constitution." Anyone with access to the Web will be able to share the wealth of the world's creative genius; "Now just-ordinary people will be able to have that information at their fingertips."

Those who currently profit by reselling patent data still will be able to do so, Lehman predicts, by finding ways to help users draw needles of usable information out of that vast haystack of data.

Malamud is withdrawing his Web patent effort, and he praises the Clinton administration for making this treasure available to us all. "It's a good thing," he said when we talked. "The intellectual property market is going to change because of this."

Lehman denies that Malamud's campaign figured in what the PTO will now do. Putting the database on the Web site, he notes, has been in the works for some time and is a key element of both Vice President Gore's "Reinventing Government" initiative and Commerce Secretary William M. Daley's efforts to boost electronic commerce.

But before launching the site, the PTO had to first ensure that its patent reviewers had access to the full database, Lehman said, and then a separate system for the general public had to be developed to ensure security. These things always take longer than activists would like. "Like everyone, he wanted it yesterday," Lehman said of Malamud with a sigh.

However it happened, I'm just overjoyed that this vast data tsunami is going to hit the Net. I think about people like my pal Scott Campbell, a New York inventor who drives down to Washington a few times a year to do patent research, who now will be able to do much of that work from his home.

I think of high school students who might someday be inspired by examining online the images of Thomas Edison's patent application for the first phonograph. I'm wondering what ideas will be sparked by their searches.

And I know that somewhere, the Founders are smiling.

Schwartz can be reached at schwartzj@twp.com

Places to Go

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office can be found at <http://www.uspto.gov/>. You can read Lehman's announcement of the online patent initiative at <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/com/speeches/aba9806.htm>.