

From: Stuart Heinrich [e-mail redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, October 12, 2010 2:00 PM
To: Bilski_Guidance
Subject: A plea to end software patents

My name is Stuart Heinrich. I have a masters degree in computer science and am currently an ABD PhD candidate in computer vision / computer science.

I am writing to express my deep concern over the rising number of ridiculous far-reaching software patents that are being issued without regard to prior art, widespread use, or obviousness of the "invention." Patents that range from the concept of "shutting down" a computer to "establishing a network connection" to "using a GPU to process video", etc.

Software patents seem to have degenerated into nothing more than a way for billion dollar companies to squelch competition -- not only by patenting the obvious, but by patenting ideas that are already in general use, or by patenting unspecific approaches to important problems rather than specific solutions to problems. The problem with allowing companies to patent generic ideas without having ironed out the details is that a big company can churn out hundreds of patents on ideas that are easy to dream up without even having worked out the necessary details -- thus preventing anyone else who actually does spend the time working out the details from being able to use that technology.

The growth of software technology is exponential, and the current lifetime of software patents is also prohibitively long lasting. This type of patent stifles innovation, hinders the economic growth and technological advancements of our country, and makes the rich richer and the poor poorer.

As someone who intends to start up a small software business, it is incredibly scary to realize that it is literally impossible to develop software without infringing upon dozens of senseless patents, for fear that even the basic textbook principles could be patented at any time without any regard to prior art.

Software patents do not serve the common good of our country. It is time to put this nightmare to rest. Please do the right thing and end software patents entirely.

Sincerely,
Stuart Heinrich