

Welcome to my blog

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10 February 2008

Hi. My name is Ben Klemens, and this is my blog.

I hold a number of titles at the moment: I'm a Guest Scholar at Brookings, I'm the Executive director of the End Software Patents project, and I'm the Senior Statistician at a lab at NIMH. I have all these part-time jobs primarily because I suffer from an acutely short attention span, but there is a definite link: information, and the math we use to collate and understand all that information.

Given the variety of directions in which I approach information, there are a variety of directions in which I could take this blog; I've decided to primarily talk about the politics of information.

The concept is relatively new. There once was a time when all of mathematics was simply accepted as a work of nature (or the divine), not of man. As such, the idea that mathematics or other facts about nature could be owned, traded, and politicked over was just weird. With respect to patent law, that makes me the most conservative guy in town, because I want to restore the scope of patent law to where it was before loopholes were developed to allow mathematics, price lists, and other types of plain information to be patented.

Is this an anti-patent stance? Not at all. In fact, the overall patent system will be healthier after it is restored to its intended scope.

But I'm getting ahead of myself: there will be time for blog posts about all of the above. For now, I should just tell you about the blog itself.

I expect to be unabashedly long-winded. It is hard to express complex ideas in a 700-word op-ed, or still worse, a thirty-second sound byte. So, I hope that this blog will be a place you can go to for longer, more in-depth information.

An interesting artifact of having so many jobs is that each comes with its own constraints. For example, the ESP has no official position on any issue not having to do with softpatents. I make an effort to not put out anything under the Brookings name unless I've given several colleagues the chance to fact-check or veto it. So let me say what I will no doubt be repeating many times: this is my personal blog, and nothing here should be construed as the official opinion of Brookings, the ESP, NIMH, or my aunt Daliah.

That said, welcome to the blog. I hope you enjoy it.