

Editorial

Copyrights, Designs, Patents, and Trademarks: Why Every Lawyer Needs IP Literacy

In today's knowledge-driven economy, intellectual property (IP) is central to progress, shaping societies and industries by protecting creativity and innovation. IP is not just an asset; it structures how markets function and rewards creators. For lawyers, regardless of specialisation, IP literacy is now an essential skill. Copyrights, designs, patents, and trademarks safeguard distinct elements of human ingenuity. Mastering these fundamentals enables lawyers to guide clients through an increasingly complex legal landscape. For this reason, the Stockholm LL.M. programme in European Intellectual Property Law has thrived for over 20 years, equipping legal professionals to meet the demands of modern IP.

Throughout the years that the programme has been running, both the students and the teachers faced several pressing challenges. These challenges stem from rapid technological change, globalisation, the need for practical skills, and the evolving role of IP in addressing broader social and ethical concerns. One of the biggest challenges that lawyers face, on both sides of the classroom, is the rapid pace of technological innovation. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, and digital platforms constantly generate new legal problems (and questions). Courts, policymakers, and lawmakers often struggle to keep up, and law schools face the same difficulty in updating their curricula. The rise of AI tools presents a further obstacle. AI challenges fundamental concepts of authorship, inventorship, and ownership in IP law. Moreover, the proliferation in the use of AI tools by students decreases critical thinking, dulls the research outputs (and often produces hallucinations and AI slop), and poses a serious ethical problem in academic honesty. There is also the underlying issue of specialisation. IP is a vast field encompassing patents, copyrights, designs, trademarks, trade secrets, geographical indications of origin, and more. The conundrum that educators face revolves on whether to provide broad exposure to all types of IP rights or deep specialisation in selected few.

Too much breadth can leave students with a superficial understanding, while too much specialisation risks narrowing their opportunities. The challenge here lies in striking the right balance that reflects the diverse career paths one can take with a degree in IP law.

A second challenge (in teaching and studying IP law) arises from globalisation and a push to harmonise laws within the IP field. IPRs are territorial in nature, yet commerce, innovation, and cultural exchange are increasingly global. This creates the need for students to understand international frameworks such as the World Trade Organization and the work of the World Intellectual Property Organization, the differences and levels of regulation within a regional system in Europe, as well as the differences between regional systems and the ways in which IP protection can differ in the US, EU, China, and beyond. Furthermore, legal education in IP must also confront ethical and policy dimensions. IP rights influence access to medicines, the regulation of digital culture, the protection of indigenous knowledge, and the preservation of the public domain. Therefore, there is a growing need to train future IP lawyers to appreciate how IP laws intersect with questions of social justice, cultural diversity, and human rights.

This is why the LL.M. programme in European Intellectual Property Law at Stockholm has undergone several changes throughout the years in order to prepare students for the real-world complexities of modern IP practice. As an alumna myself (academic year 2013/2014), the programme I attended was quite different than the one I started teaching in 2016, when I joined Stockholm as a doctoral student. A decade ago, problems facing IP law were linked to ethical bio patents, the legality of sharing songs and movies online, unfair commercial practices by competitors in creating similar trademarks, and falsified goods – to name a few. In 2016 onwards, the list of problems was enlarged by (for example) the rise of blockchain technologies, non-fungible tokens, the move from physi-

cal markets to digital markets, the Covid-19 pandemic and access to medicine, AI, shifting of consumer attitudes to sustainable products and the certified origin of food. This elongation of the list of problematic areas proliferated the impact of IPRs in the world around us – and more importantly, enlarged the need (and interest) in studying IP law.

Today, IP law is no longer confined to niche legal practice; it permeates virtually every area of law. Employment contracts must address ownership of employee-created works; commercial transactions often involve transfers of IP rights; litigation in many fields increasingly has an IP dimension; and even the use (and abuse) of import tariffs is linked with products that have IPRs embedded in them. Moreover, globalisation and the rise of digital technologies have made IP protection more complex and more critical than ever. Lawyers without IP literacy risk leaving clients vulnerable, overlooking key assets, or failing to recognise legal risks.

For this reason, legal education in IP is of immense importance in the modern world. It not only protects the rights of creators but also fuels economic growth, prevents disputes, and supports research and cultural preservation. By equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge, IP education ensures a balanced system that rewards innovation while safeguarding the public interest. As societies continue to evolve through creativity and technology, the need for strong legal literacy in IP becomes more pressing than ever.

This issue reflects the challenges that are faced in IP law, and I am happy to join Professor Frantzeska Papadopoulou Skarp as a content editor for SIPLR – a journal that allows me to read fresh perspectives on these challenges – and write this editorial. The authors in this issue are master students at Stockholm. In this issue, Alma

Johansson explores trademarks in the EU with her *The principle of unitary character of the EUTM: A legal chimera?*, while Emmanouela Papadaki sparks our interest with *Intertextuality and pastiche: the perfect recipe, or bland mediocrity?*. Klara Schinzler invites us to consider *From Reproduction to Licensing: Applying Article 15 CDSMD to the Process of Generative AI Training*, and Asko Metsola proposes how to balance innovation and competition through SEPs in his contribution *Standard essential patents (SEPs) in the EU – a way forward from the withdrawn SEP Regulation proposal*. Lastly, Ragi Vyas takes us on a journey through *Slow Fashion, Fast Fashion and Intellectual Property Rights*. We hope you will enjoy the r(ide)ad.

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