

18 February 99

University of Missouri
Patent and Copyright Committee

Re: Media based instructional materials

I have been involved in various outreach, distance learning efforts since 1973 at three universities (Purdue, University of Arizona, University of Missouri in Columbia and now in Rolla). These experiences lead me to conclude that:

1. Media based instruction (video, internet, and other formats) will grow dramatically in the months and years ahead. This trend will be driven by efforts to improve quality and reduce cost of instruction for on-campus students and place-bound, distance learning students of all types. The “virtual campus” is quickly becoming the new reality.
2. Faculty and students involved in a learning environment are inherently creative and innovative in their approach to the learning experience. Students want to learn, and learn quickly. Faculty want students to learn, and learn quickly. A stimulating learning environment composed of a community of scholars (faculty and students) is the ideal venue for creative expression.

The current discussion concerning ownership of media based, intellectual property can generate fear and mistrust unless we move quickly to clearly define and implement progressive policy with regard to faculty rights. Copyright law in democratic societies exists primarily to protect the rights of the creator and to stimulate the creative enterprise. **I recommend that we continue a policy that will stimulate creative expression, and protect the best interests of faculty and students involved in these activities.** We should completely avoid a “got-cha” mentality, where intellectual property ownership comes into dispute simply because of its format. Ownership of intellectual property should reside with the originator regardless of the format or mode of delivery. Faculty should be

encouraged to explore new educational methods and delivery modes without fear of losing ownership of their materials (class notes, slides, publications, etc.) because of delivery format.

Of course, there will be exceptions to this general guideline. For instance in the case of a “work for hire”, research contracts, or when the university has invested heavily to make the creative expression possible (purchase of special equipment, etc.). In these cases the originator and the university should enter into a simple contractual relationship where the university and the originator both profit. Otherwise the university should become involved only at the invitation of the originator.

I believe the most liberal policy will produce an environment that will stimulate and accelerate creative expression. In addition, I am sure we wish to attract and retain the brightest and most creative faculty and students. The best and the brightest may be attracted to more progressive environments unless their rights are clearly protected. What is best for the faculty and students of this great university is what is best for the university and the citizens of our state.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ken Ragsdell". The signature is written in black ink and has a fluid, connected style.

K.M. Ragsdell
Professor of Engineering Management