

Gaming Research Tips

.....quick start for studies, reports and papers

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Tip Sheet # 16: Intellectual Property

Highly specialized. This is not an area for the novice or the researcher who lacks legal expertise and scientific knowledge. It is included as a brief introduction to a complex and increasingly more important area of gaming.

The reader is urged to verify all information through proper professionals and authorities.

Patents, copyrights and trademarks.

Property rights are not limited to tangible items like equipment and real estate. The law recognizes an innovator's right to the fruits of his or her intellectual labor.

Patents cover devices and machines but may also include software, Internet methods, business methods, and casino game methods.

Copyrights cover written material, visual works, sound recordings and the like, as well as creations called derivative works.

Trademarks protect the source of goods or services, such as logos, slogans and packaging.

Slot machine design. Examine the pictures and wording on a slot machine and you may be looking at valuable assets beyond the machine itself

At stake may be the rights in the name of the game, the illustrations on the glass, the images of cartoon characters, the faces of celebrities, and more.

Manufacturers create original designs in some cases and in others they had to purchase the rights for games, such as Jeopardy, Betty Boop, Wheel of Fortune and dozens of other symbols and content.

Other areas. Copyright impacts the use of casino logo on T-shirts and other products, contents of a casino's web site, advertising materials and other visual items.

Patents extend to obvious machine design and to programs operating the inner workings of the machines.

Casinos sue each other over alleged stolen ideas. Harrah's maintained its "Total Rewards" program for its players club was infringed.

Casino acquisitions/mergers. When casinos are sold or merged the intellectual property rights are considered an important asset and a bargaining chip.

Legal staff. Gaming manufacturers and casinos employ a staff of lawyers in charge of their patent portfolio, special licenses, technology contracts and related legal duties and obligations. Some of their attorneys are also engineers or others with scientific credentials.

Suggested topics for research.

- patent or copyright implications of a casino marquee
- dispute resolution procedures for intellectual property infringements
- periodic review of inventions and patent applications
- employee confidentiality and non-competition agreements when they leave for another casino
- elements of a trade secrets program
- protection of computer software documentation, source code and updates

For more information.

[Gaming IP](#). Web site of gaming intellectual property specialists with useful articles, links and more.

Intellectual property in the new technological age. Merges, R., et al., 2003.

Intellectual property: Examples and explanations. McJohn, S., 2003.

Content rights for creative professionals: copyrights and trademarks in a digital age. Arnold, P. L., 2003.