To: Engineering Communications

From: Patrick Austin (10-1)

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Subject: Baker v. Selden Law Impact Statement

This 1879 case establishes a precedent concerning whether a process described in a book is protected under copyright law. The court found that while the text itself can certainly be copyrighted, the process described or explained is effectively released to the public and cannot be copyrighted. Selden’s text on book-keeping had a legitimate copyright, but he could not extend that copyright to the system of book-keeping described in his text to prevent people like Baker from using it, modifying it, or making their own texts inspired by his system. This decision influenced the engineering field by preventing the copyright of techniques described in a text, which could have inhibited the spread of engineering knowledge and made it much more costly and legally complex to document and spread scientific and engineering concepts.