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Watkins' "Patent trolls: Predatory litigation and the smothering of innovation" (Book Review)

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Though focused on the ECE field, many of the strategies and skills would be applicable to most educators. A majority of the current books in the ECE field deal with child development, assessment, and other classroom issues. This work focuses on the relationship that can be developed between teachers and parents, as well as, provides a practical guide to navigating an often difficult part of education.

Reviewer

Jennifer A. Rich, Hope International University

Watkins, W. J., Jr. (2013). *Patent trolls: Predatory litigation and the smothering of innovation*. Oakland, CA: The Independent Institute. 96 pp. \$17.95. ISBN 9781598131703

A 2011 *This American Life* radio program asks the question, “Why would a company rent an office in a tiny town in East Texas, put a nameplate on the door, and leave it completely empty for a year?” (*This American Life: When Patents Attack!* <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/441/when-patents-attack>). The program goes on to answer the question and introduces the concept of the patent troll, “a derogatory term in Silicon Valley for companies that amass huge troves of patents and make money by threatening lawsuits” (*This American Life*).

William J. Watkins, Jr.’s book *Patent Trolls* lays out some of the basic concepts that relate to this issue. The author asserts that these “patent trolls” are stifling innovation and costing the economy billions of dollars annually while failing to foster and incentivize the scientific progress that the patent system was intended to do. The text of the entire work, however, is only sixty pages in length, plus a six page forward, eight pages of notes and a bibliography of three and a half pages. Such a book can only scratch the surface of a topic that encompasses two highly technical fields such as law and patent policy.

Patent Trolls does a good job of introducing the reader to the specific issues involved and then directs the reader’s attention to a particular Federal District Court in the rural Eastern District of Texas that has become a magnet for patent infringement suits brought by various “patent troll” companies. He concludes with a chapter devoted to proposed measures to remedy the worst abuses. His proposals for reform include shortening the time for software patent protection, civil litigation reforms that would allow patent cases to be steered away from that particular Federal District Court in eastern Texas (a venue that he asserts unfairly tips the balances of justice in favor of these “patent troll” plaintiffs), and movement of cases away from lay juries and into specialized courts, plus requirements that plaintiffs be “actively in

business” rather than just existing to bring patent suits. He also suggests adopting some approaches from the European Patent Office that he asserts have been effective.

Hearing the *This American Life* program I referenced above is what first piqued my interest in patent trolls and their predatory litigation. I recommend listening to that program (or reading the transcript) as a compelling and concise introduction to this topic. Mr. Watkin’s book is effective as a basic primer but its discussion and proposals merely dip one’s toe in the water of the subject. Appropriate for level 100 or 200 undergraduate course work.

Reviewer

Judson L. Strain, Olivet Nazarene University

Strivens, R. (2016). *Philip Doddridge and the shaping of evangelical dissent*. Ashgate studies in evangelicalism. New York: Routledge. 201 pp. \$87.96. ISBN 9781472440754

Robert Strivens has reworked his University of Stirling doctoral dissertation on Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), a leading English Dissenter. Strivens portrays Doddridge within his eighteenth-century socio-cultural context, including the intellectual-philosophical and ecclesiastical-theological trends of his era. His theology has been characterized as a Baxterian “middle way” or “moderate Calvinism.” Doddridge opposed demands for confessional subscription (and deviated in his explanation of Christ’s pre-existent nature). Instead, he focused upon biblical language, while maintaining a preliminary role for natural theology. In his spirituality, he highlighted the means of prayer, journaling, solemn covenanting, family worship, and the Lord’s Supper. Major influences upon him included the philosophy of John Locke, the apologetic and ethical work of Samuel Clarke, the theology of Richard Baxter, and the personal impact of Isaac Watts (although he diverged from all four at various points). Like Watts, Doddridge was a prolific hymn writer, although his corpus of nearly 400 hymns are not listed among the primary sources “principally” informing the volume (p. 17), meriting only a brief discussion (pp. 131-132). Doddridge sought a plain style of preaching (frequently targeting young people), and his sermons focused on the person of Christ and the need for regeneration. He emphasized a “heart religion” but also an ordered ecclesiology, and he remained cautious toward the growing revivalism of his day. Doddridge’s correspondence and relationships webbed him into an international network of Evangelicals. Strivens discusses Doddridge’s penchant for unity (while opposing Deism and Catholicism), without ever referencing his relevant theology of baptism. Regarding paedobaptism, Doddridge declared that Christians should “avoid all severe and unkind censure on account of