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Subject: Re: gif license

Posted by [Dennis Boccippio](#) on Fri, 02 Nov 2001 15:26:32 GMT

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In article <slrn9u2tmu.ffk.nobody@pooh.nrel.gov>,  
nobody@nowhere.com (Steve Smith<steven\_smith>) wrote:

>> Personally, I'm torn on the LZW issue. On one hand, I think it's  
>> perfectly reasonable to protect intellectual property, on the other  
>> hand, I'm still peeved over U's handling of the issue several years  
>> back, which smacked of a bait-and-switch, and doesn't seem corporate  
>> behavior worth rewarding...  
>>  
>> - DJB  
>>  
>  
> Maybe you know something I don't, but I recently posted a link to an article  
> about the history of the LZW/GIF issue. From that article, I gathered that  
> LZW  
> was used by many (like Compuserve) without permission and that Unisys was  
> either oblivious or didn't care about it till some time later. It doesn't  
> sound  
> like it was an intentional act aimed at proliferating LZW by giving it away.

Either way, it's not something I care to reward. If they were oblivious to the use, they missed out on one of the biggest innovations in recent memory (the Unisys patent FUD, IIRC, popped up a couple of years after the introduction of the WWW, when GIF was already a de-facto standard - remember when even JPGs broke browsers?), and that doesn't exactly seem to be corporate behavior worth rewarding. If they knew about the unauthorized use and were \_allowing\_ it to become a de-facto standard before raising the FUD, it was a pure bait-and-switch, certainly not behavior worth reporting.

Either way, they declined or neglected to protect their own interests early on. Perfectly within their right (I would assume, deference given to people who actually know patent law), but not something I'm overly impressed by or overly inclined to reward.... MHO only...

> I  
> think what's really disturbing is that in the present situation, nobody knows  
> if what they are doing is legal until they've had a long consultation with  
> Unisys and secured a license.

Agreed.

- DJB

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