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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CLAIM CONSTRUCTION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CLAIM CONSTRUCTION BASICS	3
1. Intrinsic Evidence	3
TIMING OF CLAIM CONSTRUCTION	4
1. §101	4
2. Early Claim Construction	4
3. Summary Judgement	5
CLAIM CONSTRUCTION: PRIOR PROCEEDING	5
TIMELINESS OF CLAIM CONSTRUCTION : REVISED / AMENDED CONTENTIONS	9
1. Contention revisions / amendments allowed	9
2. Contention revisions / amendments refused	12
CONSTRUCTION OF SPECIFIC TERMS	12
1. “A”	13
2. Do Not Advance Imaginative Claim Constructions	14
EFFECT OF REFERENCE NUMERALS IN CLAIMS	15
CONSTRUING CLAIMS NARROWLY TO PRESERVE VALIDITY	16
USE OF SPECIFICATION RE CLAIM CONSTRUCTION	17
SPECIFICATION: USE OF SPECIFICATION DEFINITIONS	28
SPECIFICATION: IMPROPER TO READ EMBODIMENTS INTO THE MEANING OF A CLAIM TERM	29
SPECIFICATION: IMPROPER TO ADOPT CONSTRUCTION EXCLUDING A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT	38
ABSENCE OF SPECIFICATION EMBODIMENT THAT FALLS OUTSIDE OF CONSTRUCTION	43
PREAMBLES	47
PREAMBLES – WHERE PREAMBLE IS NOT LIMITING	48
PREAMBLES – WHERE PREAMBLE IS LIMITING	54
CLAIMS: LANGUAGE OF CAPABILITY	58
CLAIMS: NEGATIVE LIMITATIONS	59
CLAIMS: FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS VS. INTENDED USE	60

CLAIMS: “WHEREIN” CLAUSES	62
CLAIMS: PRODUCT BY PROCESS LIMITATION	64
CLAIMS: MIXED APPARATUS / METHOD	65
CLAIMS: ANTECEDENT BASIS	66
CLAIMS: SIMILAR CLAIM TERMS SHOULD INCORPORATE CONSTRUCTION OF ONE ANOTHER	66
TRANSITIONAL TERMS	68
1. Consisting essentially of	68
2. Comprising	76
3. Consisting of	78
MARKUSH LIMITATIONS	79
MPF LIMITATIONS: FAILURE TO IDENTIFY SUPPORTING STRUCTURE	85
MPF LIMITATIONS: NO INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE FOR SUPPORTING STRUCTURE	86
MPF LIMITATIONS: ALGORITHMS AS SUPPORTING STRUCTURE	88
MPF LIMITATIONS: EXAMPLES	93
PROSECUTION HISTORY AS CLAIM CONSTRUCTION RESOURCE	96
PROSECUTION DISCLAIMER	100
PROSECUTION: DISCLAIMER EQUIVALENT	104
DICTIONARIES RE CLAIM CONSTRUCTION	108
EXPERT TESTIMONY AND CLAIM CONSTRUCTION	109
Expert Testimony Contradicting and/or Attempting to Alter Trial Court Markman Claim Construction	109
DESIGN PATENTS	111
1. Patent / Figures Don’t Define Claimed Design with Reasonable Certainty	111
2. Preamble of Design Patent Claim May Be Scope-Determinative	115
POST GRANT PROCEEDINGS : NOTICE OF CLAIM CONSTRUCTION ISSUES / POSITIONS	120
CONCLUSION	123

Claim construction continues to provide essential foundation to the two principal considerations in every litigation / contested matter involving U.S. patents: the infringement and the validity of the claims in issue. Claim construction was also part and parcel of every *ex parte* USPTO proceeding under

its "broadest reasonable construction in view of the specification to one of ordinary skill in the art (BRI)," claim construction rubric, as had particularly been the case with USPTO post grant IPR/PGR proceedings, where the petitioner is required to provide (at least a limited) claim construction as part of its petition seeking PTAB review. *See* 37 C.F.R. § 42.104(b). That changed, however, as of November 13, 2018, when all post-grant proceedings dropped BRI and adopted *Phillips v. AWH Corp.*, 415 F.3d 1303 (Fed. Cir 2005) (en banc) and its claim construction regime for all petitions filed on or after November 12, 2018. (Some of the decisions reported herein applied BRI construction because of the filing dates of litigation and / or post grant proceedings)

As is the norm, the latest decisions of the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ("Federal Circuit"), the trial courts and PTAB panels, while maintaining the *Phillips v. AWH Corp.* over-arching methodology, made major and minor changes in applicable precedent and procedure.

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1. USITC, District Court and PTAB materials, not otherwise attributed, which are sources / quoted in this paper, were physically sourced / excerpted from author - reviewed Docket Report daily published documents, in accordance with License and Permitted Uses for Docket Report, <http://homedockernavigator.com/terms-of-use> (5/22/13 rev.).

Claim Construction Basics

1. Intrinsic Evidence

The scope of a claim term may be limited when intrinsic evidence establishes the context of the patent to be narrowly focused. *MCRO, Inc. v. Bandai Namco Games America*. Appeal No. - Slip op (Fed Cir. ____). In *MCRO*, the trial court defined the claim term "morph set weight" to require three-dimensional vectors, then granted Bandai's motion for summary judgement of non-infringement. On appeal, the parties did not dispute that when "morph set weight" is construed to require three-dimensional vectors, the Developers do not infringe. *MCRO* argued that the trial court erred in construing the term "morph set weight" by narrowly construing "vector" to require three-dimensional vectors, rather than adopting *MCRO*'s broader construction of "vector" which included any ordered set of numbers.

The Federal Circuit rejected *MCRO*'s argument finding spatial terms such as "vertex" and "topology" used in the specification to describe the claimed process, as well as recitation of "three-dimensional characters" in the preamble of the asserted claims "strongly favor[ed] the narrow geometric meaning of 'vector'." The Federal Circuit also found support in an equation summarizing the claimed process. Because the equation required addition of a three-dimensional vector with a sum of the vectors at issue, the court concluded the summed vectors must also be three dimensional. The Federal Circuit concluded that the meaning most appropriate in the context of the patent was that "vector"

required three-dimensional vectors and affirmed the trial court's claim construction and finding of non-infringement.

Tsunoaki et al, "Intrinsic Evidence Establishing the Context of a Claim Term Can Limit Claim Scope", Lexology Knobbe Martens (May 26, 2020).

Timing of Claim Construction

1. §101

Teradyne, Inc. v. Astronics Test Systems, Inc., et al, Civil Action No. 2-20-cv-02713 (CD Cal 2020), Motion to Dismiss-Failure to State a Claim (Aug 7, 2020) (court denied without prejudice defendant's motion to dismiss on the ground that plaintiff's over-voltage test patent encompassed unpatentable subject matter because claim construction and a technology tutorial had not occurred: **"The Court agrees with [plaintiff] that the §101 inquiry in this case would be aided by further proceedings, including a technology tutorial and claim construction.** The meaning of the claim phrase 'with the output being a test result and/of being an over-voltage indication' will likely be relevant to not just a §101 challenge, but other invalidity challenges. ... Although [defendant] suggests that means-plus function claiming is not relevant to the §101 inquiry, a narrowed, structurally focused construction of various claim limitations (or the opposite) could ultimately matter here." (page 7)).

Enserion LLC v. Orthofix, Inc., Civil Action No. 4-20-cv-00108 (ED Tex 2020), Motion to Dismiss-Failure to State a Claim (Sept 16, 2020) (court denied without prejudice defendant's motion to dismiss on the ground that plaintiff's cloud-assisted rehabilitation system patent encompassed unpatentable subject matter because claim construction had not occurred: **"Determining the claims' scope -- and thus whether they are directed at patent ineligible subject matter -- often requires claim construction. ... This is such a case.** The claim construction hearing is currently scheduled (in 5 months) and will provide the Court a more complete understanding of the claimed invention." (page 3))

V. Sattui Winery v. Landmark Technology A, LLC, Civil Action No. 3-19-cv-05207 (ND Cal 2019), Motion to Dismiss - Failure to State a Claim (Sept 30, 2020) (court denied without prejudice plaintiff's motion to dismiss on the ground that defendant's data processing patent encompassed unpatentable subject matter because claim construction had not occurred: "The Court defers plaintiff's motion to dismiss the counterclaims for patent ineligibility until after claim construction. The motion is terminated without prejudice." (page 1)).

2. Early Claim Construction

SSI Technologies, LLC v. KUS Dongguan Zhengyang Electronic Mechanical LTD Civil Action No. 3-20-cv-00019 (WD Wisc 2020), Motion to Compel Discovery (July 20, 2020) (court denied defendant's motion to compel plaintiff to disclose its claim construction contentions as contrary to the scheduling order: **"This court puts claim construction deadlines in its patent lawsuit scheduling orders for a reason, and the court's case-specific deadlines clearly trump defendant's general reliance on Rule 33 as a basis to jump the gun.** As common sense would suggest, in light of the court-ordered deadlines, additional discovery on this topic may be sought later. If defendant had

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