

Paul Allen refiles suit against Internet giants

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Interval Licensing LLC, a company owned by billionaire Microsoft Corp. co-founder Paul Allen, has filed an amended lawsuit against Facebook, Google Inc. and nine other companies, claiming they infringed on patented Web technology.

Interval Licensing, based in Seattle, owns the rights to information systems, computer science and communications technology developed by Interval Research, which Allen co-founded in the 1990s. Interval Research no longer exists.

The filing is a revision of the lawsuit Interval Licensing filed in August against Facebook, Google, Google's video site YouTube, AOL Inc., Apple Inc., Yahoo Inc., Netflix Inc., eBay Inc., Office Depot, OfficeMax, and Staples.

U.S. District Court Judge Marsha Pechman in Seattle dismissed the original suit because it did not name the infringing products.

Interval's new lawsuit, filed Tuesday in District Court in Seattle, is chock full of examples of the four patents in question. Two of the patents are related to the way websites suggest additional, related content to what's being shown on the screen. Among the many examples cited, Interval said Google and Yahoo's news sites infringe on these patents by displaying related headlines.

The companies' search advertising systems and e-mail spam filters also infringe on these patents, Interval said, as do features on Netflix and eBay that recommend related products or products based on a user's shopping or movie-watching history.

The other two patents are related to the way computer programs and websites send alerts to the user without disturbing their main activity on the computer, unobtrusively and off to the side. Interval says the infringing products include AOL's instant messaging system, Google's Gmail notification software and Yahoo's news widget, among many other items.

Interval is asking for damages and, going forward, either royalties or a ban on the companies' use of the technology.

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