

PART III

Intellectual Responsibility

This part of the book is about the intersection of ideas and the law. It addresses the question of how to use ideas responsibly—your own and those of others—while understanding the protections of intellectual property (IP) law. Why is this important to a Citizen Engineer? At a macro level, the economic repercussions of IP law can be enormous. At a more personal level, the opportunity is immense. By mastering the world of IP law—patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, and so forth—you gain a powerful tool for propagating your ideas and controlling the destiny of your innovations. You make it possible to allow others to amplify your ideas, and to create the types of products that are consistent with your ethical goals and your company’s financial objectives. Here are just a few of the questions we’ll address in this part of the book.

- What’s the difference between a patent, a copyright, and a trade secret?
- What’s an open source license, and why are there so many?
- If you’re working on an open source project, who owns what you contribute?
- How do you protect your work outside your country?
- What are an engineer’s responsibilities in protecting privacy?

- When should you sign a nondisclosure agreement—and when should you require others to sign one?

In this part, we provide discussion and practical advice about each of the key IP protection mechanisms: patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, nondisclosure agreements, and employment contracts. We look at both **inbound IP**, or how you use the ideas of others, and **outbound IP**, or how others are permitted to use your ideas. We also examine the most common variants of open source software licenses and offer guidance for developers. And we offer a few thoughts about how intellectual responsibility can translate into economic advantages for your company—and more control over your ideas and innovations.

*Much of the content in this part is applicable in the United States only; if you're working outside the United States, make sure you familiarize yourself with local permutations of IP law. Equally important to note is that we aren't lawyers, so you shouldn't construe anything here as legal advice. The best legal advice we *can* give you is to get to know some good lawyers and seek their participation and counsel.*