7. Patents

**Simson Garfinkel, *Patently Absurd***

1. How did it come to be that software patents are so freely issued, when "mental processes" or "algorithms" were traditionally thought unpatentable? [Andy P]

2. What are "bad patents"? What are some examples given in the article? Why do they get issued? [Matt R]

3. The article says that the real problem may not be the invalid patents, but the valid ones. Why? How are patents used to exclude small companies from the market? [Tammy T]

4. Patents made big news in the smartphone market, where virtually all big companies are sued each other. Give a brief overview of the situation. Do you think innovation is being served? (This may require some Web research.) [Nick VK]

5. Describe how you think "inventions" should be protected in an ideal society. What would the rationale for protection be? How would that rationale best be met? [Mark VS]

**Paul Graham, *Are Software Patents Evil?***

6. Explain Paul Graham’s argument that software patents are not a bad thing. Do you agree? Why or why not? [Arie vL]