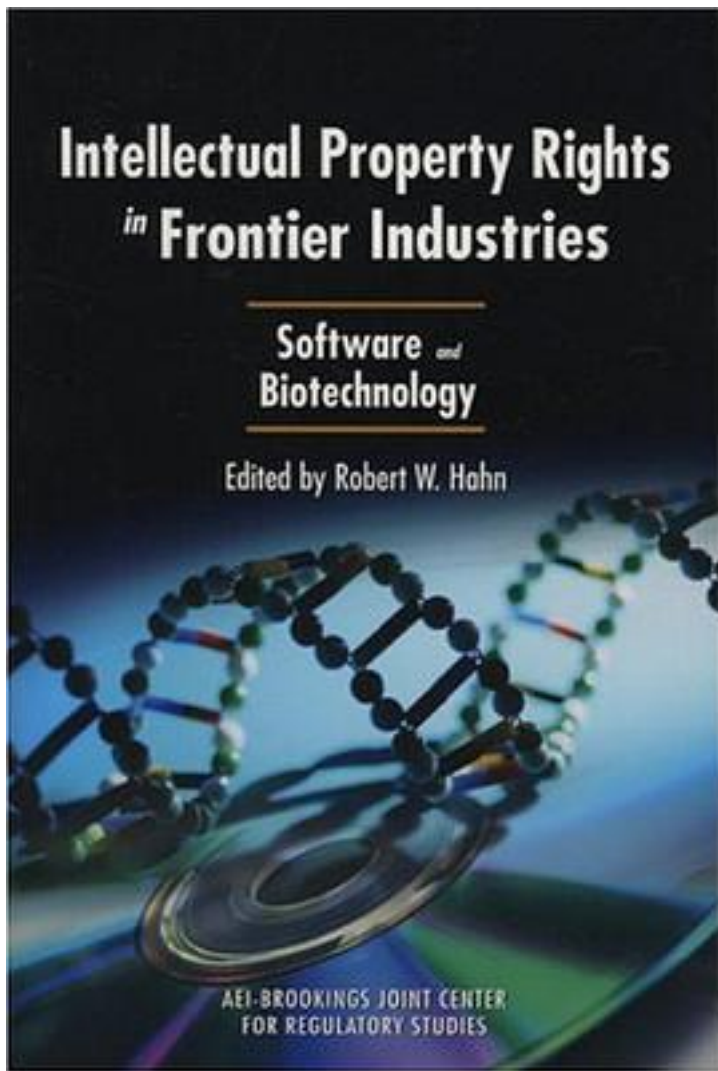


Intellectual Property Rights in Frontier Industries



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Of all the controversies surrounding the current U.S. patent system - and there are many - the debate over intellectual property rights in high-technology industries is one of the most strident. Both software and biotechnology are dynamic, fast growing, and increasingly important fields. Creating the right incentives for innovation in these key industries is not just a matter of academic debate; the issue has real implications for the growth of the economy. Despite the stakes - or perhaps because of them - the academic community has reached little consensus on how to spur innovation in these fields without inhibiting follow-on research or denying the public access to the fruits of technological change. Some argue that strong intellectual property rights in these industries create a "patent thicket" that only the most seasoned industry veterans can navigate, and even then at great cost. Others point to the dearth of evidence that patent thickets actually exist. They make for nice theory, but where is the proof? In this volume, leading intellectual property scholars tackle these issues. The authors express their views on how the current system is faring in the "information age" and how it might be improved. The analysis focuses on the software and biotechnology sectors and covers both legal and economic points of view. These chapters make no pretense of resolving the age-old debate; given the history of the American strand of the intellectual property rights dispute, which dates back to the seventeenth century, no definitive end is in sight. But this volume does offer valuable insights into intellectual property protection rules in an information economy and provides an important perspective on how to solve some of the more pressing issues.

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