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## Facebook Sued for Patent Infringement Over “Like” Button and Timeline Function

# FACEBOOK SUED FOR PATENT INFRINGEMENT OVER “LIKE” BUTTON AND TIMELINE FUNCTION

*by Asha Velay*

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Mark Zuckerberg is not going to “like” this.

A Dutch Patent-holding company, Rembrandt Social Media, filed a complaint against Facebook last week in the U.S. District Court of Virginia, acting on behalf of the widow and family of Dutch programmer, Joannes Jozef Everardus Van Der Meer. According to Van Der Meer’s camp, the late programmer patented Facebook’s “like” and “timeline” functions in 1998, six years before Zuckerberg launched Facebook.

Van Der Meer tried to capitalize on his inventions after he was granted the patents in 2001 and 2002. He founded a company called Aduna, and bought the domain name “surfbook.com.” Surfbook was intended to be a social networking site in the form of an online diary that allows users to approve data by using a “like” button. The complaint states that Surfbook also lets users “collect personal information and third-party content, organize the information chronologically on a personalized Web page, and share the information with a selected group of people, such as the end user’s friends, through the use of user-settable privacy levels.” Van Der Meer passed away in 2004 before he was able market his website and fully utilize his inventions.

Although he is not a household name like Mark Zuckerberg, Van Der Meer’s legal team believes he was a highly influential social networking pioneer. “We believe Rembrandt’s patents represent an important foundation of social media as we know it, and we expect a judge and jury to reach the same conclusion based on the evidence,” said Rembrandt’s attorney, Tom Melsheimer.

What is potentially damaging is that Facebook is more than aware of Van der Meer’s patents. In June, Facebook was granted a patent for a method of running cross-platform applications on wireless devices. In its application, one of Van der Meer’s patents was even cited as a reference.

The outcome of this case could encourage more litigation if Rembrandt prevails. Facebook did not always have the “like” function; this was a relatively recent enhancement in Facebook’s evolution from a college social networking site to the world’s most popular social network. If Facebook comes up with more enhancements, more companies could be encouraged to pursue litigation over individual functions. Rembrandt Social Media has sued for unspecified royalties. No word from Facebook yet, but this is exactly why the site needs a “dislike” button.

