

'Area 51' Trademarked?

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 Date: Wed, 8 Jan 1997 19:19:59 -0800
 Subject: 'Area 51' Trademarked?

Date: Thu, 2 Jan 1997 17:07:12 -0800
 From: stuart@hal.com (Stuart Hastings)
 To: webmaster@ufomind.com
 Subject: 'area 51' is trademarked

I don't think this makes any difference to the Area 51 Research Center, but Atari Games apparently trademarked "Area 51" around May/June 1996.

I noticed this while watching my brother run the home version of the "Area 51" game on his JAGUAR home videogame console (an orphaned product of Atari Computer). I haven't seen the commercial version, but I suspect the home version would be identical to my non-expert eyes.

Atari Computer used to have the domain www.atari.com. This was the home videogame and computer business, associated with Jack Tramiel (sp?). 'Tis gone now; they merged into JTS Corp., a maker of disk drives. JTS owns the domain jtscorp.com, but they don't seem to have a WWW page.

Atari Games (commercial coin-op game mfr) is still in business, and they own the domain atarigames.com, but they don't seem to have a WWW page either.

I was able to find the trademark (without charge) in the "sample database" at the site <http://www.micropat.com>. On their search form, I set "Word Mark" to "area 51", and "Type of Mark" to "trademark".

Just thought you'd be amused,

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FROM GLENN

I suspect that the trademark claim is actually held by Time-Warner, which has an Area 51 video arcade game. (In a fit of impulse, I tried to play it once at local casino. The machine took my 50 cents and didn't give me any game. Damned slot machines!)

Another company, 800-TREKKER, also claims an Area 51 trademark, and they have slapped "Area 51" on a line of cheesy merchandise, from hats to coffee mugs to "Property of Area 51" T-Shirts. (Rich with imagination, they are.)

I think the copyright claim is much stronger in the Time Warner case. If you try to sell another video game by that name, you're in for a beating. Slapping 'Area 51' on generic merchandise is less dangerous. As I recall, the copyright law (which I once reviewed in the law library) has an exemption for words that are purely geographical. You can't trademark "Area 51" on a T-Shirt any more than you could for "Las Vegas" or "New York."

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