


Chapter 5

Social Responsibility and Intellectual Property in the Era of Digital Technology: Who Should Own AI- Generated Inventions?

Wasswa Shafik

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9320-3186>

Dig Connectivity Research Laboratory (DCRLab), Uganda

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the intersection of social responsibility and intellectual property (IP) within the evolving landscape of digital technology. It critically examines how digital innovation impacts the balance between protecting intellectual assets and ensuring ethical access, inclusivity, and accountability. Algorithmic governance, digital rights management, equitable access to knowledge, AI-generated content, and open licensing frameworks. The chapter provides a multidisciplinary analysis of legal, technical, and ethical dimensions, highlighting the tension between proprietary control and the public good in areas such as software development, data privacy, digital art, and indigenous knowledge systems. Case studies and comparative frameworks are used to illustrate the challenges and opportunities facing policymakers, developers, and global communities. Through a focus on emerging technologies such as blockchain and AI, the chapter emphasizes the need for socially responsible IP frameworks that uphold innovation while safeguarding digital equity and cultural sensitivity.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-8510-5.ch005

Copyright © 2026, IGI Global Scientific Publishing. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global Scientific Publishing is prohibited. Use of this chapter to train generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is expressly prohibited. The publisher reserves all rights to license its use for generative AI training and machine learning model development.

1. INTRODUCTION

We are witnesses to a fast-paced technological development, which has seen the rise of information and digital technologies, the dissemination of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and, most recently, the “Cloud”, Big Data, and Artificial Intelligence-based technologies, which are changing the way we live, think, and relate to each other (Malik, 2024). Contemporaneously, we are facing mounting dilemmas around the multiple crises shaking the world, in the political area, the economic area, the environmental area, and the social area. To respond to all or any of these crises, there are only three types of actors capable of taking action: states, through public policies; the for-profit sector, through strategic corporate actions and social corporate responsibility; and the non-profit sector, through philanthropy and other initiatives aimed at helping those in need (Blaskovic et al., 2023).

Being one of the activities “responsible” for the current crises, it is only natural that Intellectual Property rights would be questioned and that the need to rethink them could emerge. So, the question arises as to whether the conceptual and normative framework that presently regulates the appropriation and allocation of knowledge and intangible assets, their transfer and circulation, and the framework which supports fundamental principles such as creativity, innovation, and growth, remains adequate and effective to respond to all the challenges and dilemmas faced by current-day societies, and to address the legal and ethical issues surrounding the digital networked technologies (Shafik, 2024d). However, rethinking IPRs in the context of the current social and ethical crises means rethinking their social responsibility. The specific question posed here is: What does social responsibility mean for IPRs, in the context of the ethical dilemmas raised by the digital economy? As we shall see, this question derives from, and leads us to, some fundamental issues of IPRs and/or the IPR system (Shafik, 2023).

2. UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Social responsibility is a broad and complex concept that has been given many definitions. A social responsibility is an obligation to perform actions that benefit society and contribute to the public good. Social responsibility is the duty of a business to contribute to the well-being of a community. Fittingly, however, when academics, policy makers, and the general public debate what social responsibility actually means, most of the time they address a particular subject, such as citizens, corporations, and so forth (Narayanan & Pradhan, 2024; Shafik, 2025f). A popularly cited version defines social responsibility as the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, and to follow those lines of action

32 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/social-responsibility-and-intellectual-property-in-the-era-of-digital-technology/397483

Related Content

An Active Low Cost Mesh Networking Indoor Tracking System

Sean Carlin and Kevin Curran (2014). *International Journal of Ambient Computing and Intelligence* (pp. 45-79).

www.irma-international.org/article/an-active-low-cost-mesh-networking-indoor-tracking-system/109628

A Review of Four Persuasive Design Models

Kristian Torning (2013). *International Journal of Conceptual Structures and Smart Applications* (pp. 17-27).

www.irma-international.org/article/a-review-of-four-persuasive-design-models/100450

Rethinking "Oil Nationalism": The Case of Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC)

Neveen Abdelrehim (2015). *International Journal of Signs and Semiotic Systems* (pp. 33-49).

www.irma-international.org/article/rethinking-oil-nationalism/142499

Intelligent Radar Detectors

Raúl Vicen Bueno, Manuel Rosa Zurera, María Pilar Jarabo Amores, Roberto Gil Pita and David de la Mata Moya (2009). *Encyclopedia of Artificial Intelligence* (pp. 933-939).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/intelligent-radar-detectors/10354

Geospatial AI Concepts and Fundamentals

Dina Darwish (2025). *Recent Trends in Geospatial AI* (pp. 1-26).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/geospatial-ai-concepts-and-fundamentals/363695