



JEAN SCHULTE: Capitalizing on copyright management to enhance tech transfer outcomes

National Renewable Energy Laboratory



Jean Schulte

Recognizing copyright management as a technology transfer asset, Jean Schulte has embraced that process to generate intellectual property (IP) portfolio growth, inventor buy-in, and an unexpected licensing revenue stream for the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL).

Since taking over management of NREL's software intellectual property portfolio in late 2016, Schulte has streamlined the way the lab manages copyright assertions and deployment of its copyrightable subject matter and software tools. These efforts were already starting to pay off in Schulte's first year, when she facilitated 57 new software records—nearly double the yearly average for the

previous five years. The number of records continued to increase over the next several years, reaching an unprecedented total of 109 software records in 2020.

But Schulte's accomplishments aren't just about the numbers. They're also about the intangible benefits that result from effective communication with inventors, IP attorneys, and prospective licensees.

Schulte has been lauded for her ability to distill a complex subject down to its fundamental issues or salient points, and then communicate those points in an easily digestible manner. This ability has enabled her to interpret and translate highly complex copyright acquisition and licensing processes to both inventors and licensees.

Although she does not have a computer programming background, Schulte has become an expert in multiple types of programming languages and the different licensing terminologies associated with software releases, allowing her to effectively communicate with inventors.

In fact, Schulte has cultivated a belief among NREL inventors that engaging with the software commercialization process can be a benefit, both to their research and to the world. She has inspired researchers to value copyright as a desirable asset—not only something that is necessary to obtain from

a deployment and compliance perspective, but also something that can enhance their funding efforts, encourage partnerships with the lab, and in some cases, lead to license revenue generation.

“It is safe to say that without Jean taking on this role, software innovation at NREL would look dramatically different.”

—Anne Miller, NREL Technology Transfer Office Director

Similarly, Schulte has also mastered the nuances of both the Copyright Act and its interactions with various open- and closed-source licensing mechanisms. This allows her to effectively negotiate with both IP attorneys and prospective licensees to more easily facilitate the transfer of these innovations to practical use.

She has also played a critical role in updating, modernizing, and drafting templates for T2 agreements including Trademark License, Software Sales & Distribution License, Software End-User License, Intellectual Property Management Plans, Inter-Institutional Agreements, Nondisclosure Agreements, and Material Transfer Agreements.

“Jean has revolutionized software innovation at NREL with her competence, ability to command respect from innovators and CEOs alike, and her infectious enthusiasm attitude,” said NREL Technology Transfer Office Director Anne Miller. “It is safe to say that without Jean taking on this role, software innovation at NREL would look dramatically different. We feel incredibly lucky to have Jean on our team.”