

**Learning to Live with Patents:
Acquiescence & adaptation to the law by the scientific community**

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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

July 2008

Law plays a central, but under-appreciated role in knowledge work. While economic and policy scholars debate the way in which changing legal institutions, particularly expanding property rights, shape the daily lives of knowledge workers, lawyers, with their contracts and concerns, are not key actors on the stage of detailed ethnographies of knowledge work. We reconcile these alternatives arguing that in response to changing legal institutions, knowledge communities acquiesce to but also adapt to and adapt the law. We use our analytical framework to ground an empirical study of the role played by changing legal enforcement of intellectual property rights in shaping exchange in knowledge communities. Using a large-scale quantitative analysis of publications and patents drawn from a period characterized by dynamic changes in property rights enforcement, we econometrically assess whether and how the enforcement of intellectual property rights over scientific knowledge influences the life sciences community. We also examine how different sub-communities acquiesce and adapt to legal changes at differing rates. More broadly, we initiate an agenda incorporating legal institutions into scholarship on communities of practice and knowledge work.