Panel: Software Patents and their Potential Impact on the EDA Community

**Chair:** Dennis Fernandez - Fenwick & West, Palo Alto, CA  
**Organizer:** William M. vanCleemput - Delos Research Group, Mountain View, CA

Protecting software related intellectual property through patents is a rapidly growing phenomenon. Recently, a storm of controversy followed the issuance of the "Compton Multimedia" patent. This was followed by an equally controversial court decision in the Stac vs. Microsoft case.

The Electronic Design Automation community is also becoming embroiled in patent and intellectual property related issues. More than 600 patents, issued by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, are directly relevant to Electronic Design Automation. On the one hand, inventors not only of hardware but also of software want to see their creations protected. On the other hand, software developers feel that software patents are a burden that will stifle creativity and make it impossible for individuals and small companies to be a key factor in developing new software products. Others familiar with the problem point out that initially many patents were issued for already existing matter and that these patents are therefore invalid.

This panel discussion will focus on various aspects of protecting intellectual property through patents. Some of the questions to be explored:

- Are software patents here to stay?
- What is the proper vehicle to protect intellectual property in the EDA industry?
- What is the potential impact on smaller EDA companies?
- What should EDA software developers do?
- Is a 17-year term reasonable for patent protection of software-related inventions?
- Is software patent protection enforceable outside the U.S.?
- What would happen if a significant number of key EDA patent owners start enforcing their rights?

**Panel Members:**

Herman Beke - Mentor Graphics Corp., Leuven, Belgium  
George C. Chen - Reliance International Law Offices, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC  
Ewald Detjens - Exemplar Logic, Inc., Berkeley, CA  
Joseph E. Hustein - GEC Plessey Semiconductors Inc., Scotts Valley, CA  
William Lattin - Logic Modeling Corp., Beaverton, OR  
William M. vanCleemput - Delos Research Group, Mountain View, CA