

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE PATENT TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

MICROSOFT CORPORATION,

Petitioner,

v.

STERLING COMPUTERS CORPORATION

Patent Owner.

Case IPR2025-00270

U.S. Patent No. 8,073,911

PATENT OWNER'S SUR-REPLY

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EXHIBIT LIST

Patent Owner's Exhibit No.	Exhibit Description
2001	Declaration of Britta Loftus, Feb. 7. 2025
2002	Declaration of Latifur Khan, June 24, 2025
2003	Curriculum vitae of Latifur Khan
2004	Ramez Elmasri & Shamkant B. Navathe, FUNDAMENTALS OF DATABASE SYSTEMS, 195-201 & 941-949 (3d ed. 2000)

I. The Claim Term “*Relational References*” Requires a Relational Model.

Patent Owner (“PO”) respectfully requests the Board adopt its proposed construction of “*relational references*,” requiring use of a relational model.¹

The ’911 specification (i.e., “the single best guide to the meaning of a disputed term”) supports PO’s proposed construction. *Phillips v. AWH Corp.*, 415 F.3d 1303, 1315 (Fed. Cir. 2005). In addition to repeatedly stressing the “relational” nature of the system (EX1001, 2:1; *id.* 3:8; *id.* 4:62; *id.* 5:24), the specification also expressly states that “**the messaging system uses a relational model** to represent and store messages exchanged among the end-users.” EX1001, 2:60-62. Petitioner complains that the specification does not “defin[e]” “relational model” (*id.*), but a skilled artisan would not need a “definition” to understand the meaning of “a relational model.” Entire chapters of textbooks on database systems from the early 2000s are devoted to the “relational model.” EX2004, at 7 & 17. Because the “relational model” was so well understood, it was unnecessary for the specification to define “a relational model.” A skilled artisan would understand the term. *Id.* at 17-23; EX2002, ¶ 87.

The discussions of relational **databases** in the specification similarly support PO’s proposed construction. Petitioner acknowledges that the ’911 Patent – via incorporation by reference of U.S. Pat. App. No. 10/789,461 – “**teaches a relational**

¹ The claim construction process in the underlying litigation had only just begun at the time the case was stayed. The proper construction of the claim terms in the underlying litigation has not been briefed (let alone construed by the Court). PO will take the same positions on claim construction in the litigation as it does in these proceedings.

database.” Reply, at 2 (emphasis added). A skilled artisan would understand that the specification’s discussions of database modules refer to using a relational model. *E.g.*, EX1001, 5:48-50 (“These modules respectively contain a message database **416**, an audit information database **418**, a security database **420**, and a governance policy database **424**.”); *see also id.* 2:4; *id.* 2:6; *id.* 8:9; *id.* 2:16 ; *id.* at 4:21; *id.* 3:60-4:4; *id.* 5:51-8:51; *id.* 14:66-67; *id.* 15:9-10; EX2002, ¶¶ 26-27, 87, 94-95, 99.

PO’s proposed construction also is supported by the “context of the particular claim.” *Phillips*, 415 F.3d at 1313. Every claim requires “**relational** references.” A skilled artisan would understand that the plain and ordinary meaning of “*relational references*” requires using a relational model. EX2002, ¶ 87; EX2004, at 18 (“The relational model represents the database as a collection of relations.”).

Petitioner argues that, if PO’s construction were correct, “pointers would be unnecessary, and the claim language ‘relational references **pointing**’ would be meaningless.” Reply, at 2.² A skilled artisan would understand, however, that “a pointer” can be “a physical one containing an address, or a logical one containing a key.” EX2004, at 31. The relational model of the ‘911 Patent uses the **logical** one (keys, rather than physical ones). EX2002, ¶¶ 26-27; EX2004, at 19 (“a relation attempts to represent facts at a logical ... level”). Therefore, the claim language “*pointing*” refers to logical “*pointing*” and does not negate using a relational model.

² The ‘911 Patent does not use the noun “pointers”; it uses the verb “to point.” *See* EX1001.

Next, Petitioner argues that the '911 Patent does not discuss using features of relational models, including "tables" or "keys." Reply, at 2-3. With respect to "tables," however, the '911 Patent repeatedly discusses the use of "databases" in connection with the "*relational references*," and a skilled artisan would understand that relational databases consist of a series of tables. *Cf.* EX2002, ¶ 94. With respect to "keys," the '911 Patent discusses the need for unique IDs (EX1001, 5:59-63), which are the "shared keys or identifiers" that PO's expert explained are used in the relational model. EX2002, ¶ 38. A skilled artisan would understand that the discussion of unique IDs refers to a relational model and relational database. *Id.* ¶¶ 38-39. The use of unique IDs would be unnecessary in, e.g., a hierarchical model.

II. Petitioner's Proposed Construction Ignores the Claim Term "*Relational*."

Petitioner argues that the claim term "*relational*" simply refers to "related messages" (and that the claim term "*references*" refers to "pointers"). Reply, at 3. Petitioner's construction ignores that the word "*relational*" has a specific meaning to a skilled artisan. *See supra* at 1-2 & EX2004. Petitioner's construction also would result in redundancy in the claim language – i.e., "pointers pointing." Even if Petitioner is correct that "'a reference' is 'a pointer'" (Reply, at 3), that ignores the claim term "***relational***," which refers to a "relational model." Petitioner's proposed construction should be rejected because it does not give meaning to "*relational*."

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 42.6(e), I certify that on this 1st day of August 2025, a true and correct copy of the foregoing **Patent Owner's Sur-Reply** was served by electronic mail on Petitioner's lead and backup counsel at the following addresses:

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