Lab Assignment #2

Note: Lab assignments should be e-mailed to David Albert before class on the due date.

In class on Monday, March 21st, we will be examining a variety of technical topics dealing with the examples of specific methods by which trademarks might be infringed -- although of course it is up to current and future case law to determine whether legal infringement has occurred in each of these cases. In this assignment you will experiment with some of these issues.

Part A -- A scavenger hunt for META tags.

A <META …> tag on a web page is (by definition) ignored by your web browser. So what good are these META-tags? Among other potential uses, the information found in certain META tags may be used to help control whether a page shows up high on a list of returned results in a search engine, which search words will find the site at all, and how the site will be described. Examples:

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<META Keywords="your, keywords, go, here">
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or

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<META Description="a concise description of your site goes here">
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Pages that do not otherwise contain a particular search keyword may nevertheless show up in search results if the word is present in a META tag -- but the typical user, who does not view the marked-up source code of the site, would have no way of knowing why the page was part of the results. The "Description" tag is still used by Google and AltaVista, among others, to help describe the site in search engine return results. It is commonly assumed that most search engines rely heavily on the "Keywords" tag in their search rankings, but as you have read for today that is largely incorrect; the Keywords tags nevertheless remains popular.

Other ways of hiding text on a page include <IMG ALT="…"> tags and the use of text in the same color as the page background.

Your task for this part of the assignment is to try to find text in a META tag, <IMG ALT="…"> tag, color-hidden text, or the like, that fits the following criteria:

1. The word or phrase is present and easily visible in a website's Page Source.
2. The word or phrase is the trademark of a competitor to the site you found.

That is, you are looking for a website that might be infringing on someone else's trademark by use of hidden or otherwise invisible text. You are not looking for any other sort of infringement here.

For Part A, turn in (via e-mail):

a. The website you found (complete URL, so I could find it if I chose)

b. The word or phrase you found that is the trademark of a competitor to the site you found.

c. The HTML source code used to hide the word you found.

d. Your observation as to whether the word or phrase you found can actually be used as search words on Google (or another search engine of your choice -- please specify!) to bring up the site containing them.
PART B - hunt for domain names and trademarks.

For this part of the lab assignment, you will be using the following websites:

http://www.internic.net
http://www.networksolutions.com

(1) Using the Internic (www.internic.net) website, go to the "WHOIS" database and find an English-language dictionary word (not a proper noun) for which a .com registration does not yet exist. *Hint: try various word forms other than the root of a word; plurals, past tense, etc.* When you type in the domain name, be sure it consists of only a single word followed by .com. Do not type "www" or any third-level domain name. Don't use the example provided on the first day of class! What domain did you find? *[Note: if there is any question as to whether you have come up with a real word, please consult a dictionary and inform me of the authority by which you claim the word to be a real word.]*

(2) Now try to find ANY nice-sounding domain, using only alphabetical characters, for which a .com registration does not yet exist. Try some two-word phrases (without hyphens), or nonsense words that sound as if they might make a nice company name. You should be able to come up with something, although it may be harder than you think. What did you come up with? Were there phrases you tried because you thought they would be unregistered but that were in fact registered? If so, list one or two.

(3) Now go to the www.networksolutions.com website. Using their WHOIS search engine, answer the following questions:

(a) Who owns panavision.com today? (That is, who is the "registrant"?)

(b) Who owns nissan.com today?

(c) Now, still using the WHOIS database, try to find a nationally-recognized trademark whose .com domain registration appears to be in someone else's hands. What domain did you find? Who owns it? Who did you expect would own it?