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School's Out: 8 Summer Reading Picks For IP Attorneys

By **Theresa Schliep**

Law360 (June 17, 2025, 3:58 PM EDT) -- For busy intellectual property attorneys, summer can present the perfect opportunity to catch up on some reading, whether it's a treatise on contracts in the entertainment sector or a vivid work of science fiction that has the potential to bring new perspective to one's personal and professional lives.

Law360 offers up eight books for IP attorneys' summer reading lists, recommended by practitioners themselves.

"Chronic City" by Jonathan Lethem

Sometimes, the ideal book for understanding our current time is one that mixes the familiar with the strange.

Take "Chronic City" by Jonathan Lethem, recommended by Loeb & Loeb LLP partner Frank D'Angelo, who said he'd pour through Lethem's books as a young attorney in New York, where many of the writer's novels are set. This book, published in 2009, features characters that might feel recognizable: a former child actor, writers, a wealthy mayor. But it also involves some strange plots, like a mysterious fog and a loose tiger.

This combination of the normal and the absurd does a pretty good job at capturing today's information environment, according to D'Angelo, whose specialties include copyright and defamation law.

"The style and narrative make it difficult to decipher what's real and what's not, which is how the world can sometimes feel in today's cultural and media landscape," he said.

And the book has proven to be somewhat ahead of its time, with its use of "chaldrons," which are collectibles that "seem to exist only in digital marketplaces and that are never clearly described or defined in the book beyond their prices," D'Angelo said.

"One can't help but think about [nonfungible tokens] and other digital assets when reading about them, which makes Lethem's novel particularly prescient," he added.

"Shoe Dog" by Phil Knight

Asked to name the most recognizable brand in history, a lot of people would probably mention Nike.

From its iconic "swoosh" logo to its famous collaboration with basketball great Michael Jordan, it's worn on the feet and backs of people from all backgrounds, ranging from professional athletes to school-aged children.

But as IP attorneys know, the place that Nike holds in our culture is no accident. Phil Knight's "Shoe Dog" explores the founding and growth of Nike from the perspective of Knight, one of its co-founders. He explores the growth of the company from a fledgling company, which Knight created to import lower-cost running sneakers from Japan, to the multibillion-dollar giant we know today.

Like most business stories, the highs in "Shoe Dog" are high, and the lows are low. It comes recommended by Preetha Chakrabarti, a Crowell & Moring LLP partner who called it the "essential brand story of Nike, one of the most iconic brands of its time."

"Any brand protection attorney would love a book that really shows the sweat equity needed to have an unforgettable, global brand like Nike," said Chakrabarti, a member of her firm's IP and advertising and brand protection groups. She does not represent Nike.

"11/22/63" by Stephen King

It's nice when books can help you escape reality for a bit, while also providing some grounding parallels to work and everyday life.

Such a book is Stephen King's "11/22/63," which marks a bit of a diversion for the prolific horror writer, known for books like "It" and "Salem's Lot." As the title suggests, the novel is about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. More specifically, it's about one time-traveling man's attempts to stop the assassination, based on the theory that Kennedy's killing changed history for the worse, leading to events like the Vietnam War.

Gerard Donovan, a partner in Reed Smith LLP's IP and emerging technologies groups, recommends the book, saying it offers both escapism and lessons for IP litigators.

"Its melding of history leading up to the Kennedy assassination with time travel and the complexity of changing history provides an escape from day-to-day IP litigation and recharges creativity," Donovan said. "The theme that small actions can have far-reaching and unpredictable consequences also offers a compelling parallel to IP law, where decisions made today shape the future landscape."

Those consequences can vary, but they all caution careful strategy since "every action, no matter how small, can have significant and sometimes unexpected consequences," Donovan said.

"Choosing not to protect IP today can result in competitors exploiting innovation; conversely aggressive strategies can stifle collaboration, innovation, or even provoke or prolong litigation," he said.

"Entertainment Industry Contracts" by Donald C. Farber

While summer reading is often a chance to catch up on just-for-fun reads, the season also might provide the time for doing some deep, subject-specific reading.

For the IP attorneys whose work touches on the entertainment industry, Elizabeth A. Corradino, who heads the entertainment and media, technology and IP practice groups at Moses & Singer LLP,

recommends Donald C. Farber's "Entertainment Industry Contracts," which she said "remains a succinct yet remarkably comprehensive reference that demystifies the complex web of agreements underpinning film, television, theater, music, publishing, sports, and art."

Available at law libraries and on some online stores, Farber's text includes template clauses and agreements that Corradino called "both instructive and easily adaptable."

The text, which is regularly updated, manages to cover emerging and evolving trends in the industry, including streaming services and the growth of the influencer economy, according to Corradino.

"Although its scope occasionally necessitates a high-level treatment of niche topics, the clarity of organization, depth of precedent, and pragmatic tone make 'Entertainment Industry Contracts' an indispensable tool for practitioners and in-house counsel seeking authoritative guidance and reliable drafting templates," she said.

"The Caine Mutiny" by Herman Wouk

There are many figures of speech available to describe law firms. Maybe the firm seems like a machine, with its components seamlessly integrating with each other and where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Or maybe it's like an army, which prioritizes discipline, hierarchical structures and acquiescence to leadership.

The latter type of organization is what's explored in a book endorsed by Friedland Cianfrani LLP partner Michael Friedland, who said he has recommended "The Caine Mutiny" by Herman Wouk to associates at all large law firms.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, published in 1951, depicts a mutiny on a Navy ship in the Pacific during World War II. The ship's captain might feel familiar to those working in the lower rung at big law firms, according to Friedland, whose practice covers all types of IP and whose firm has five attorneys.

"The book is the classic tale of the crew of a Navy ship attempting to manage an egotistical, erratic, insecure and largely incompetent captain," Friedland said. "Most large firm associates will identify with the crew — and will recognize the personality type of the captain."

"The Dispossessed" by Ursula K. Le Guin

There's something about science fiction that seems especially fitting for IP attorneys. Perhaps it's because in an increasingly postmaterialist society, creations of the mind become more and more valuable. Or it could be that IP attorneys, who work with cutting-edge technologies and the inventions of the future, can appreciate the imaginations of the most inventive science fiction authors.

One of the science fiction genre's most renowned authors is Ursula K. Le Guin, whose novel, "The Dispossessed," is recommended by David Kim, another Friedland Cianfrani partner.

It's somewhat challenging to describe the novel — set on real planets in a star system a dozen light years away from our own, "The Dispossessed" explores themes of utopianism and anarchism, individualism and collectivism. But it might be the perfect science fiction novel for IP attorneys, who are used to dealing with science and complexity.

"It explores contrasting societal views on ownership and intellectual property, prompting critical examination of traditional IP incentives and the ethical implications of controlling knowledge," Kim said.

"Counterfeit" by Kirstin Chen

For IP attorneys who want something a little more on point for their next beach read, Michelle Mancino Marsh, an ArentFox Schiff LLP partner, has a recommendation: "Counterfeit" by Kirstin Chen.

The book tells the story of Ava Wong, a Chinese-American attorney who gets caught up in a scheme with an old friend who convinces her to get into the business of importing counterfeit luxury handbags. The novel explores themes of the model minority myth and the American dream, all in an exciting and at times unexpected story.

The book adeptly explores both the fashion industry and the massive underground market of counterfeits that are imported to the U.S. by the ton every day. And for Marsh, co-leader of ArentFox Schiff's consumer products group, there are lessons to the story's high jinks.

"It has good character development while also revealing the many consequences of the counterfeiting trade," Marsh said.

"The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz

A lot of the average attorney's work will comprise helping clients broker agreements with other parties. But what about the agreements we broker with ourselves?

It's that latter type of agreement — the commitments we make to ourselves, the principles we choose to stick to, the people we promise to do right by — that are at the center of Don Miguel Ruiz's book "The Four Agreements," recommended by Elaine Spector, a Harrity & Harrity LLP partner. In it, Ruiz articulates four guiding principles for life, and Spector said she revisits the book again and again.

"The four agreements — be impeccable with your word, don't take anything personally, don't make assumptions, and always do your best — have become foundational for how I approach relationships at work and at home," Spector, a patent attorney, said. "I recommend it to anyone looking for practical wisdom to stay grounded and maintain perspective, especially in our fast-paced legal environment."

--Editing by Kelly Duncan.