

INTRODUCTION TO VIRTUAL PROPERTY: *LEX VIRTUALIS IPSA LOQUITUR***W Erlank*****SUMMARY**

This article serves as an introduction to the concept of virtual property and also to very briefly note the relevance of virtual property in modern society. A universally accepted definition of virtual property is hard to come by, but the paper will aim to provide some clarity on the issue. Virtual property is still property, and it still exists even though it is intangible. It includes (amongst other things) website addresses and email addresses as well as certain other accepted immaterial property objects such as bank accounts, stocks, options and derivatives. Indeed, one can go so far as to include digital goods, such as digital versions of books (e-books), computer or smartphone programmes or apps, television series and movies as well as digital music (albums and tracks) as objects of virtual property. However, the focus in this paper is on the type of virtual property found inside virtual worlds. The discussion of virtual property will be facilitated by reference to some of the ancillary and more complicated areas of the field to serve as a point of reference leading to an understanding of the concept of virtual property in general.

KEYWORDS: virtual property; virtual worlds; intangible property; intangible objects; objects of property law; property law; Second Life; Facebook; World of Warcraft; immersion; virtual reality; virtual property theft; intangible property.

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