

## **Northern District of Illinois**

### **Local Patent Rules for Electronically Stored Information**

#### **LPR ESI 1.1 (Purpose)**

These Local Patent Rules for Electronically Stored Information (“Rules”) supplement all other discovery rules and orders. The purpose of these Rules is to assist courts in the administration of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 1, to secure the just, speedy, and inexpensive determination of every civil case, and to promote, whenever possible, the early resolution of disputes regarding the discovery of electronically stored information (“ESI”) without Court intervention.

#### **LPR ESI 1.2 (Cooperation)**

(a) Counsel shall cooperate in all aspects of seeking and responding to discovery requests.

(b) The failure of counsel or the parties to litigation to cooperate in facilitating and reasonably limiting discovery requests and responses will be considered in cost-shifting determinations.

#### **LPR ESI 1.3 (Discovery Plan)**

The standard set forth in Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(b)(2)(C) should be applied in each case when formulating a discovery plan. To further the application of the standard set forth in Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(b)(2)(C) in discovery, requests for production of ESI and related responses should be reasonably targeted, clear, and as specific as practicable.

#### **LPR ESI 1.4 (Privilege and Waiver)**

(a) Pursuant to Federal Rule of Evidence 502(d), the production of a privileged or work product protected ESI is not a waiver in the pending case or in any other federal or state proceeding.

(b) The mere production of ESI in a litigation as part of a mass production shall not itself constitute a waiver for any purpose.

(c) A producing party that requests the return of ESI on the ground that it is privileged or work product protected must provide the receiving party with the information required by Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(b)(5)(A) within 7 days of the request for return.

(d) The receiving party must return, sequester, or destroy ESI that the producing party

claims is privileged or work product protected as provided in Rule 26(b)(5)(B) and may use such ESI only to challenge the claim of privilege or protection.

**LPR ESI 2.1 (Duty to Meet and Confer on Discovery and to Identify Disputes for Early Resolution)**

(a) Prior to the initial status conference with the Court, counsel shall meet and discuss the application of the discovery process set forth in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and these Rules to their specific case.

(b) If the parties have disputes regarding ESI that counsel for the parties are unable to resolve, the parties shall present those disputes to the Court at the initial status conference pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. Rule 16(b), or as soon as possible thereafter.

(c) Prior to the presentation of disputes to the court, each party shall designate an individual as e-discovery liaison. The e-discovery liaison shall participate in the meet and confer held to resolve the dispute. Regardless of whether the e-discovery liaison(s) is an attorney (in-house or outside counsel), a third party consultant, or an employee of the party, the e-discovery liaison(s) must:

1. be prepared to participate in e-discovery dispute resolution;
2. be knowledgeable about the party's e-discovery efforts;
3. be, or have reasonable access to those who are, familiar with the party's electronic systems and capabilities in order to explain those systems and answer relevant questions; and be, or have reasonable access to those who are, knowledgeable about the technical aspects of e-discovery, including electronic document storage, organization, and format issues, and relevant information retrieval technology, including search methodology.

(d) The Court may modify the obligations and deadlines of these Rules based on the circumstances of any particular case. The parties shall jointly submit any proposed modifications within 30 days after the Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 16 conference. If the parties cannot resolve their disagreements regarding these modifications, the parties shall submit their competing proposals and a summary of their dispute.

(e) If the Court determines that any counsel or party in a case has failed to cooperate and participate in good faith in the meet and confer process or is impeding the purpose of these Rules, the Court may require additional discussions prior to the commencement of discovery, and may impose sanctions, if appropriate.

## **LPR ESI 2.2 (Preservation Requests and Orders)**

(a) Appropriate preservation requests and preservation orders further the goals of these Rules. Vague and overly broad preservation requests do not further the goals of these Rules and are therefore disfavored. Vague and overly broad preservation orders should not be sought or entered. The information sought to be preserved through the use of a preservation letter request or order should be reasonable in scope and mindful of the factors set forth in Rule 26(b)(2)(C).

(b) To the extent counsel or a party requests preservation of ESI through the use of a preservation letter, such requests should attempt to ensure the preservation of relevant and discoverable information and to facilitate cooperation between requesting and receiving counsel and parties by transmitting specific and useful information. Examples of such specific and useful information include, but are not limited to:

- (1) names of the parties;
- (2) factual background of the potential legal claim(s) and identification of potential cause(s) of action;
- (3) names of potential witnesses and other people reasonably anticipated to have relevant evidence;
- (4) relevant time period; and
- (5) other information that may assist the responding party in assessing what information to preserve.

(c) If the recipient of a preservation request chooses to respond, that response should provide the requesting counsel or party with useful information regarding the preservation efforts undertaken by the responding party. Examples of such useful and specific information include, but are not limited to, information that:

- (1) identifies what information the responding party is willing to preserve and the steps being taken in response to the preservation letter;
- (2) identifies any disagreement(s) with the request to preserve; and;
- (3) identifies any further preservation issues that were not raised.

(d) Nothing in these Rules shall be construed as requiring the sending of a preservation request or requiring the sending of a response to such a request.

**LPR ESI 2.3 (Scope of Preservation)**

(a) Every party to litigation and its counsel are responsible for taking reasonable and proportionate steps to preserve relevant and discoverable ESI within its possession, custody or control. Determining which steps are reasonable and proportionate in particular litigation is a fact specific inquiry that will vary from case to case. The parties and counsel should address preservation issues at the outset of a case, and should continue to address them as the case progresses and their understanding of the issues and the facts improves.

(b) Discovery concerning the preservation and collection efforts of another party may be appropriate but, if used unadvisedly, can also contribute to the unnecessary expense and delay and may inappropriately implicate work product and attorney-client privileged matter. Accordingly, prior to initiating such discovery a party shall confer with the party from whom the information is sought concerning: (i) the specific need for such discovery, including its relevance to issues likely to arise in the litigation; and (ii) the suitability of alternative means for obtaining the information. Nothing herein exempts deponents on merits issues from answering questions concerning the preservation and collection of their documents, ESI, and tangible things.

(c) The parties and counsel should come to the meet and confer conference prepared to discuss the claims and defenses in the case including specific issues, time frame, potential damages, and targeted discovery that each anticipates requesting. In addition, the parties and counsel should be prepared to discuss reasonably foreseeable preservation issues that relate directly to the information that the other party is seeking. The parties and counsel need not raise every conceivable issue that may arise concerning their preservation efforts; however, the identification of any such preservation issues should be specific.

(d) The following categories of ESI generally are not discoverable in most cases, and if any party intends to request the preservation or production of these categories, then that intention should be discussed at the meet and confer or as soon thereafter as practicable:

- (1) “deleted,” “slack,” “fragmented,” or “unallocated” data on hard drives;
- (2) random access memory (RAM) or other ephemeral data;
- (3) on-line access data such as temporary internet files, history, cache, cookies, etc.;
- (4) data in metadata fields that are frequently updated automatically, such as last-

opened dates;

- (5) backup data that is substantially duplicative of data that is more accessible elsewhere; and
- (6) other forms of ESI whose preservation requires extraordinary affirmative measures that are not utilized in the ordinary course of business.

(e) If there is a dispute concerning the scope of a party's preservation efforts, the parties or their counsel must meet and confer and fully explain their reasons for believing that additional efforts are, or are not, reasonable and proportionate, pursuant to Rule 26(b)(2)(C). If the parties are unable to resolve a preservation issue, then the issue should be raised promptly with the Court.

#### **LPR ESI 2.4 (Identification of ESI)**

(a) At the Rule 26(f) conference or as soon thereafter as possible, counsel or the parties shall discuss potential methodologies for identifying ESI for production.

(b) Topics for discussion may include, but are not limited to, any plans to:

- (1) eliminate duplicative ESI and whether such elimination will occur only within each particular custodian's data set or whether it will occur across all custodians;
- (2) filter data based on file type, date ranges custodian, search terms, or other similar parameters; and
- (3) use keyword searching, mathematical or thesaurus-based topic or concept clustering, or other advanced culling technologies.

#### **LPR ESI 2.5 (Production Format)**

(a) At the Rule 26(f) conference, counsel and the parties should make a good faith effort to agree on the format(s) for production of ESI (whether native or some other reasonably usable form). If counsel or the parties are unable to resolve a production format issue, then the issue should be raised promptly with the Court.

(b) The parties should confer on whether ESI stored in a database or a database management system can be produced by querying the database for discoverable information, resulting in a report or a reasonably usable and exportable electronic file for review by the

requesting counsel or party.

(c) The general presumption is that meta-data is not requested and need not be produced, unless a special request is made.

(d) ESI and other tangible or hard copy documents that are not text-searchable need not be made text-searchable.

(e) If a party requests production in a format other than the one most convenient for the producing party, the requesting party is responsible for the incremental cost of creating its copy of requested information. Counsel or the parties are encouraged to discuss cost sharing for optical character recognition (OCR) or other upgrades of paper documents or non-text-searchable electronic images that may be contemplated by each party.

#### **LPR ESI 2.6 (Email Production Requests)**

(a) General ESI production requests under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 34 and 45 shall not include email or other forms of electronic correspondence (collectively “email”). To obtain emails parties must propound specific email production requests.

(b) Email production requests shall be phased to occur after the parties have exchanged initial disclosures and basic documentation about the patents, the prior art, the accused instrumentalities, and the relevant finances. While this provision does not require the production of such information, the Court encourages prompt and early production of this information to promote efficient and economical streamlining of the case.

(c) Email production requests shall identify the custodian, search terms, and time frame. The parties shall cooperate to identify the proper custodians, proper search terms and proper timeframe.

(d) Each requesting party shall limit its email production requests to a total of five custodians per producing party for all such requests. The parties may jointly agree to modify this limit without the Court’s leave. The Court shall consider contested requests for up to five additional custodians per producing party, upon showing a distinct need based on the size, complexity, and issues of this specific case. Should a party serve email production requests for additional custodians beyond the limits agreed to by the parties or granted by the Court pursuant to this paragraph, the requesting party shall bear all reasonable costs caused by such additional discovery.

(e) Each requesting party shall limit its email production requests to a total of five search terms per custodian per party. The parties may jointly agree to modify this limit without the

Court's leave. The Court shall consider contested requests for up to five additional search terms per custodian, upon showing a distinct need based on the size, complexity, and issues of this specific case. The search terms shall be narrowly tailored to particular issues. Indiscriminate terms, such as the producing company's name or its product name, are inappropriate unless combined with narrowing search criteria that sufficiently reduce the risk of overproduction. A conjunctive combination of multiple words or phrases (e.g., "computer" and "system") narrows the search and shall count as a single search term. A disjunctive combination of multiple words or phrases (e.g., "computer" or "system") broadens the search, and thus each word or phrase shall count as a separate search term unless they are variants of the same word. Use of narrowing search criteria (e.g., "and," "but not," "w/x") is encouraged to limit the production and shall be considered when determining whether to shift costs for disproportionate discovery. Should a party serve email production requests with search terms beyond the limits agreed to by the parties or granted by the Court pursuant to this paragraph, the requesting party shall bear all reasonable costs caused by such additional discovery.