"It is quite simply the public’s right to have access to patent information,” said EPO President Benoît Battistelli. "Which makes it our duty," he continued, "to publish patent data with maximum transparency."

Speaking at the opening of the 21st EPO Patent Information Conference, which took place in Kilkenny in October, Mr Battistelli highlighted the importance of worldwide patent data and drew parallels with open government initiatives in the US and Europe.

The EPO has just launched its data.epo.org data platform and expects it to grow and develop in a similar way to national initiatives in Europe such as data.gov.uk and data.gouv.fr. The accepted norms for open government best practice include completeness, primacy, timeliness, readability by humans and machines, standards, permanence and licensing. While there seems to be agreement that the EPO’s data.epo.org portal is generally compliant with the principles of open government, delegates at the conference raised questions on discrimination-free access, licensing and usage costs. They argued that the costs of the data, although low, nevertheless represent a hurdle for small innovative companies. Some of the technical features of fair use policies, such as the one in place for the EPO’s OPS service, were seen as an outdated restriction that hampered development.

Five-star rule
Nigel Shadbolt, Professor of Artificial Intelligence at the University of Southampton and keynote speaker in Kilkenny, highlighted Tim Berners-Lee’s five-star scheme for linked data. The data of the EPO – and the

continued on page 2

other patent offices—is probably currently at three- or four-star level. Promotion to five stars would require further enrichment of the data by interlinking it—for example with economic data—to provide a context. IP data is difficult for a non-specialist public, so it will be important to provide it in user-friendly ways and to ensure that patent information fits in with other public-sector information.

Participation
Participation is a key element of open government initiatives, as exemplified by the data.gov.uk site, which includes a forum and a platform for sharing ideas. The EPO will be looking at ways of allowing more interaction on its data.epo.org portal, for example by providing feedback means, having user comments online or offering a rating mechanism for data sets.

Role of patent offices
There is certainly a broad consensus that patent offices have an obligation to make their data available to the public. Opinions vary, however, on how far the offices should go with the tools they offer for searching or processing that data. The concept of open data will give new life to the ongoing debate on where the line should be drawn between the services a public body provides and those offered on the commercial market. One thing is already clear: by making its data available, the EPO enables and encourages commercial companies to create new tools using that data.

Despite the EPO's willingness to embrace open data, there are some challenges ahead. One of these is the question of metadata and how to integrate it into the raw data offerings. In addition, if the EPO's enthusiasm spreads to other offices, there are certain to be questions about funding. Hosting open-data platforms, guaranteeing the permanence of data and maintaining high-quality data archives will mean extra costs for the patent offices.

Open data will bring patent information into close contact with other datasets, which in turn will add a whole range of new considerations:
- cross-sector thinking, including linking of patent data to other data (e.g. company information) and the need to standardise data such as company names (e.g. EU-wide IDs)
- greater need to agree standards among patent offices
- better support in understanding data
- possible move of EPO data into the cloud
- clear government policies on how IP data fits into their open-government initiatives

EPO as provider of world patent data
Open data was part of a wide-ranging conference programme that affirmed the importance of patent data. It covered major developments in the pipeline such as the Cooperative Patent Classification, a federated European Patent Register, machine translation and modernisation of the EPO's legal status database. It also included insights into how the EPO currently gathers data, using the example of Latin America to show how complex it is to maintain a worldwide patent data collection.

By placing such an emphasis on data at the conference, the EPO made it clear that it sees itself as a provider of world patent data and knows that it delivers a unique service. "The world needs someone to accept the responsibility of being the focal point for patent data," said Raimund Lutz, EPO Vice-President for International and Legal Affairs, speaking at the closing of the conference. "The EPO is prepared to be that someone."

The event in Kilkenny was co-hosted by the EPO and the Irish Patents Office. It was opened by Richard Bruton, Ireland's Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. For more information, copies of the presentations and reports on the discussion rounds, see www.epo.org/pi-conference.

ESPACENET
Tips for Espacenet users—ECLA tooltips

The big news item for the November 2011 release of Espacenet is the introduction of ECLA tooltips. If you hover over an ECLA classification term in a bibliographic view or result list, a pop-up appears which shows you where the ECLA term is in the ECLA hierarchy. An option within the tooltip is to view the clipped images from documents in that classification, and you can navigate forwards and backwards through that set of documents, viewing the images as you go.

The highlighting of search terms has also been introduced, but you can turn this feature off if you want, in the "Settings" option. You can also opt to save your search queries (ticked by default) and turn off the ECLA tooltips.

We have revised the appearance of the bibliographic view so that you don’t have to scroll down the page to see the image or read the abstract. Another feature is the digital object identifier (DOI) search input. If you know a DOI corresponding to a non-patent literature document, you can retrieve the article just by inputting “DOI =” plus the DOI number in the Smart search box.

2) www.w3.org/DesignIssues/LinkedData.html.
A turbulent and very productive year

We are nearing the end of a packed year in the world of patent information. Cooperative Patent Classification, machine translation, a new look for Espacenet and the European Patent Register, the launch of the EPO’s open data platform at data.epo.org, the availability of Italian data and, hopefully very soon, the loading of Japanese legal status data into the EPO’s services are just some of the most important events and developments of the past twelve months.

The richness and variety of these developments are further proof that the EPO is a pioneer and a world leader where patent data is concerned. We also endeavour to be the benchmark when it comes to dialogue with our users. We are aware how important it is to discuss the changes we plan to implement with users, long before they take effect. One of the major forums for these discussions is the Patent Information Conference. In 2011, it took place in Kilkenny. Apart from the special Irish hospitality, which will remain in the memory of many delegates for years, the event was crucial for gathering input and sharing opinions on today’s big topics. With their presentations, prominent speakers such as Nigel Shadbolt from the University of Southampton and Jon Orwant, Google’s Head of Engineering, laid the foundations for the debates that followed and will continue as we start to prepare for an exciting year of change in 2012.

This issue also marks twenty years of Patent Information News. It is a unique publication, consistently bringing regular information to its readers in a simple-to-read form. I congratulate the editorial team on their success over the years.

The EPO’s New Year gift to the patent information world: legal status patent data from Japan

2011 has truly been a breakthrough year. Co-operation between the Japan Patent Office (JPO) and the European Patent Office (EPO) made headline news at the beginning of the year, when the Office added millions of Japanese citations to the EPO’s databases. Now there is something even more significant to report: the inclusion of Japanese legal status data.

**JP legal status in EPO databases from early 2012**

The much-sought-after legal status data is to be uploaded in the EPO worldwide legal status database (INPADOC). Cheers of appreciation are likely to ring out across the patent information world as the good news spreads. Users have requested Japanese legal status time and time again, and they will now see their wish become reality. From the beginning of 2012, legal status events for Japanese patents and utility models dating back to the beginning of April 2011 will be uploaded in the database. Here are just a few examples of events that are to be included:

- decisions to grant (JP A01)
- fee payments (JP FPAY)
- requests for licences (JP S201)

For more information take a look at "Legal status codes in English" in the code list for Japan in the “Useful Tables” section of the EPO website at www.epo.org/searching/essentials/data/tables.html.

**Improving the quality of JP data**

Much has been done in 2011 in the way of improving the quality of the JP data collection at the EPO. In the past few months, there have been clean-up exercises (re-keying of the data) to synchronise the publication identifiers. Based on the WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) principle, the EPO is striving as far as possible to provide Japanese publication numbers in its databases in a format which is in line with the numbers as printed on the first page of the original documents.

Japanese abstracts and classification symbols

A further milestone concerning Japanese data occurred during the summer, when Japanese FI (file index) and F-term (file term) classification information as well as abstracts in English for Japanese publications (Patent Abstracts of Japan) appeared in the databases.

In conclusion, the improvements that took place in 2011 to the availability of Japanese data have been dramatic and have exceeded everyone’s expectations. They follow on from the news in 2010 that the EPO had acquired Chinese and Russian legal status data.

Slowly but surely, the EPO’s legal status database is approaching a stage where it can truly claim to cover all the main patent-granting authorities worldwide.

1) See Patent Information News 1/2011

Richard Flammer
Principal Director Patent information and European Patent Academy
SEARCH REPORTS

Common citation document – a milestone in trilateral co-operation

Bringing the search results of several patent offices together into a single document is what the common citation document (CCD) is all about. It is a new major product from the Trilateral Offices, available at www.trilateral.net/citation.html.

"Based on a proposal made by industry, the new tool will provide details about patent applications for the same invention filed at several different offices in parallel. Companies and inventors in particular stand to benefit from the improved access to information," said EPO President Benoit Battistelli.

The CCD exploits the latest web technology to bring together the prior art cited by the patent offices for the family members of a patent application and to offer very sophisticated search and display possibilities:

- a sort function for ordering the results by office of issue
- a filter for excluding applicant citations or applications without citations
- the intriguingly named "double inspector" function, allowing you to compare two applications, e.g. from the same family

There is also a visual timeline showing the evolution of the patent family and the priorities of the associated citations in the different search reports.

Go to www.trilateral.net/citation.html and try it for yourself.

The current data coverage from the Trilateral Offices will be extended in the coming months. We expect the two remaining IP5 offices (China and Korea) to join in in the near future.

Write to opus@epo.org and tell us what you think about CCD.

Search reports: when is an X document not an X document?

Connoisseurs of European search reports will know that when the EPO carries out a search for a European patent application, it includes letters in the search report to indicate the relevance of the documents found by the examiner.

"X" is the indicator for the highest possible level of relevance. It generally means that the examiner thinks that the document concerned puts the patentability of the claimed invention into question.

X splits into X and I

Since September 2011, EPO examiners have the option of differentiating internally between two types of "X" citation. This differentiation will not be visible in search reports, but can be found in the European Patent Register and many commercially available databases as the category "I" type of citation.

In these cases:

- "X" indicates that a single document is particularly relevant for reasons of novelty
- "I" indicates that a single document is particularly relevant for reasons of inventive step – in the written search report this continues to appear as "X"

Other categories in the European search report remain unaffected by this change. They include:

- "Y" to indicate a document that is particularly relevant if combined with another "Y" document
- "A" to indicate technological background
- "D" to indicate a document cited in the application

More rarely used are categories E, L, O, P and T. Explanations of these are available in the footer to every European search report, and in the EPO’s Guidelines for Examination (Part B, Chapter X, Section 9.2) at www.epo.org/law-practice/legal-texts/html/guiex/e/b_x_9_2.htm.
CLASSIFICATION

H01L21/027B2 becomes H01L21/02718

New website explains Cooperative Patent Classification

When the Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) enters into force at the beginning of 2013, the EPO will have converted all the ECLA (European Classification System) symbols for the documents in its collection to the new CPC symbols (see Patent Information News 1/2011).

The USPTO and the EPO have just launched a website at www.cpcinfo.org that explains the new CPC. The website includes a presentation on how the conversion exercise will happen.

ECLA vs. IPC

Thanks to ECLA, EPO examiners have 140 000 classification symbols at their disposal. This allows a much finer degree of classification than the globally used IPC (International Patent Classification), which has 70 000 symbols. ECLA is essentially an extension of the IPC, so people who understand the IPC and its structure can use ECLA relatively easily.

For example, the IPC symbol B60T7/04 is used to classify foot-actuated brakes in vehicles:
- B60T7/00
  Brake-action initiating means
- B60T7/02
  for personal initiation
- B60T7/04
  foot actuated

In ECLA, group B60T7/04 has the following sub-divisions:
- B60T7/04B
  ... by electrical means, e.g. using travel or force sensors
- B60T7/04C
  ... with locking and release means, e.g. providing parking brake application
- B60T7/04C1
  ..... – a further subdivision of B60T7/04C – hand-actuated release means

The titles of ECLA symbols sometimes have additional notes compared with the original IPC symbols. You can identify these notes because they are shown between square brackets and preceded by the letter “N”. See for example B60T7/20 covering brakes “specially for trailers, e.g. in case of uncoupling of [N: or overrunning by] trailer (inertia-actuated over-run brakes B60T13/08)”.

Conversion to CPC

When the conversion to CPC takes place, all the letters in the ECLA symbols after the slash (“/”) will be replaced by numbers. So H01L21/027B will become H01L21/02709 and H01L21/027B2 will become H01L21/02718 and so on.

The notes – such as “[N: or over-running by]” as described above – will remain unchanged.

ICO codes

In addition to the 140 000 classification symbols, ECLA also has a feature known as “ICO codes”. Examiners use ICO codes to classify aspects of an invention in addition to those covered by the regular ECLA symbols. There are some 200 000 ICO codes. These are not currently available for searching in Espacenet, but many commercial patent databases already include them.

The notes – such as “[N: or over-running by]” as described above – will remain unchanged.

When ECLA is converted to CPC, the ICO codes will also become part of the CPC and will thus be available in Espacenet in future.

ICO codes fall into four categories:
- Mirrored ECLA symbols – identical structure to ECLA and used by examiners to classify additional information
- Breakdown symbols – further sub-divisions of ECLA symbols
- Orthogonal codes – used to classify inventions according to different criteria compared with ECLA. For example, if ECLA describes inventions according, say, the features of a process, then orthogonal ICO codes might be used to describe the same inventions according to the materials being worked on by this process.
- Deep-indexing codes – these codes are used to tag individual features of an inventive concept. They might be used, for example, to classify the various ingredients in paint or glue.

In order to differentiate ICO codes from ECLA symbols, they currently have a different first letter, so H01L21/285B4 is the ICO equivalent of the ECLA symbol H01L21/285B4. This difference will disappear in the CPC.

The table summarises how ECLA and ICO codes are expected to be converted to the CPC.

New CPC website

Take a look at www.cpcinfo.org. Co-hosted by the EPO and the USPTO, it provides a useful overview of the Cooperative Patent Classification and the timeline leading up to entry into force in 2013.
CLASSIFICATION

Changes to the IPC in the New Year

WIPO has announced a revision of the International Patent Classification (IPC) scheme that will enter into force on 1 January 2012.

For full details go to www.wipo.int/ipcpub/. Set the “Version” in the left-hand column to 2012.01 and then click on the “Compilation” tag. A French version is available in the “Language” menu in the left-hand column.

The changes are shown in a tabular format, using the following codes:

D – deletion
C – modification with a change of scope or involving reclassification
M – modification without a change of scope and not involving reclassification
N – new
U – unchanged in this language version, but changed in the other language version

Many of the changes fall into the “M” category and involve a clarification of the title of the symbols. The IPC subclasses in the table below contain more substantive modifications.

The changes affecting G06Q – “business methods” – introduce a lot of new subgroups. This responds to a long-held need for a more refined subgroup breakdown in this area.

The EPO will update the IPC symbols for all the documents in its databases in time for the entry into force of the revision on 1 January. It will also endeavour to bring its own ECLA classification symbols into line with the new IPC as speedily as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subclass</th>
<th>Subject-matter affected by the changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A63C</td>
<td>Snowboard bindings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B24B</td>
<td>Lapping machine or devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B60W</td>
<td>Conjoint control of vehicle sub-units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B65B</td>
<td>Packaging, in particular enclosing successive articles or quantities of material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10J</td>
<td>Production of fuel gases by carbureetting air or other gases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D04H</td>
<td>Making textile fabrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E21B</td>
<td>Survey of boreholes or wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F16D</td>
<td>Couplings, in particular actuators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F16H</td>
<td>Differential gearing and general details of gearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G01C</td>
<td>Gyroscopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G01P</td>
<td>Measuring speed by using a gyroscopic effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G03F</td>
<td>Originals for photomechanical production of textured or patterned surfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G06Q</td>
<td>Data processing systems or methods, specially adapted for administrative, commercial, financial, managerial, supervisory or forecasting purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G11B</td>
<td>Recording or reproducing by optical means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H01U</td>
<td>Gas-filled discharge tubes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H01L</td>
<td>Semiconductor devices sensitive to infra-red radiation, light, electromagnetic radiation of shorter wavelength, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all the changes introduced in the autumn release of the European Patent Register, the most visible is the highlighting of search terms in the result list and the register record. The major breakthrough, however, is the deep linking to a number of national patent office registers.

Deep links to national patent registers

Announced at the EPO Patent Information Conference in Ireland this October, deep linking will make legal status information more easily accessible.

Imagine a European application which eventually makes it to grant and enters the national phase in a number of EPC contracting states. You inspect the European register, and if you want to know what happened to the European patent in a particular member state, you can now go straight to the national patent office record via the relevant deep link.

All it takes is just one click and you’re there.

The EPO is working on increasing the number of national registers that can be deep-linked in this way.

WebRegMT becomes Register Alert

Another major change coming up is the integration of Register Alert (formerly known as WebRegMT) into the European Patent Register. WebRegMT was previously a separate application, but from early 2012, you will be able to select files for monitoring and set up your user accounts from within the Register. There will be some changes to the sign-on procedure for the alert service. These will be announced in good time before the launch.
**QUALITY**

**An impostor in the family**

There were puzzled faces in the EPO’s quality team when a user drew their attention to a patent family that included two obviously different inventions: one for treating a lung disease, the other for a new transistor.

The patent family in question was an INPADOC patent family, so it covered any documents related by any common priority. The large family included documents that had multiple priorities, and it was in these priorities that the problem lay. There was an error somewhere and it was the task of the quality team to find it.

Let us have a quick look at how INPADOC patent families are generated before continuing our story.

**Definition of the INPADOC (or "extended") patent family**

In the case shown below, documents D1 to D5 belong to the same patent family, P1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY P1</th>
<th>Document D1</th>
<th>Priority P1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document D2</td>
<td>Priority P1</td>
<td>Priority P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document D3</td>
<td>Priority P1</td>
<td>Priority P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document D4</td>
<td>Priority P2</td>
<td>Priority P3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document D5</td>
<td>Priority P3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It does not matter where you start the search when you generate this type of family, the result should always be the same. It can be an application number, a priority application number or a publication number.

If the search starts with a publication number, all application numbers, domestic application numbers, priority numbers and international application numbers are used to retrieve additional documents. This is step 1. For all documents found in this step, step 1 is repeated. This iteration process ends only when no more new documents can be found.

What happened in this story was that a typing error had led to a situation similar to the one shown schematically in Table 2.

**Table 2: An INPADOC patent family where P2 is mistyped as P#**

| FAMILY P# | Document D4 | Priority P# | Priority P3 |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Document D5 | Priority P3 |

Documents D1, D2 and D3 are linked by priority P1. P2 contains a typing error and appears as P#, so the system looks for documents with P# instead of P2. It finds D4 and adds it to the family - wrongly. It then looks for priority P3, which also appears on D4, and finds D5, so another document wrongly joins the growing family.

In our story, the error was very simple, but it took a while to find it: “177” appeared as “117” in US priority number US2004017705.

This has now been corrected in the databases, and we have successfully disentangled the two families, so they now appear like this:

**Table 3: The error in P2 has been corrected, and the two families separated**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY P1</th>
<th>Document D1</th>
<th>Priority P1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document D2</td>
<td>Priority P1</td>
<td>Priority P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document D3</td>
<td>Priority P1</td>
<td>Priority P2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| FAMILY P# | Document D4 | Priority P# | Priority P3 |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Document D5 | Priority P3 |

This is just one example of the errors that can occur in the EPO’s databases. Every day, the quality team works on solving them so that the databases can be as error-free as possible.

If you spot a data error, please let us know. Just write to patentdata@epo.org.

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**PUBLICATIONS CORNER**

"Publications corner" presents the latest statistics on EPO publications.

- EP-A2: European patent applications published without search report
- EP-A3: European search reports
- EP-B1: European patent specifications
- EP-B2: revised European patent specifications

Note: The table does not include statistics on European patent applications filed via the PCT route (Euro-PCT applications). These are published by WIPO and are not made available by the EPO unless they are in a language other than English, French or German. Currently about 70% of all European patent applications are Euro-PCT filings.

**European patent publications**

**January – December 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weekly average 2011</th>
<th>Jan-Dec 2011</th>
<th>Change vs. 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EP-A documents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP-A1</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>50,988</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP-A2</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>22,332</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total EP-A1 + A2</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>73,320</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage EP-A1 of total A1+A2</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
<td>-2.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP-A3</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>18,135</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EP-B documents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP-B1+B2</td>
<td>1,213</td>
<td>63,074</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Patent Information News | December 2011
Exams for patent information professionals – mocks held

Professional certification for patent information experts took a step closer to becoming reality this October, when 54 people sat mock exams to test both their search skills and the exam concept itself.

5 cities, 54 candidates, 2 papers, 14 hours of tests

The examinations were held on 5 and 6 October at Thomson Reuters in London, the Swedish Patent Office in Stockholm and the EPO in Munich and The Hague, and a week later in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The volunteers sitting the exams came from industry, private practice and patent offices, their experience ranging from one to twenty years in the profession. Their skills were stretched in two papers of seven hours each, spread over two days, with a choice between chemistry and engineering. Of the candidates, 29 went for chemistry and 25 for engineering.

Search skills

Search skills were under scrutiny in paper A on day one. The candidates had to develop a search strategy while explaining each choice they made during the process. Of course, there is no one correct way to get the best results from a patent search, but the explanations are intended to help the markers understand the choices candidates made when planning their search.

Candidates also had to perform the search and show the number and nature of the results they retrieved. Thanks to the commercial providers who provided free login IDs for the day, participants could use the systems of their own choice. They had to complete two search cases within the seven hours that were allowed for the paper. The timing was, of course, very tight, and the developers of the exams assumed that only experienced patent professionals would be able to perform two ‘reasonable’ searches within such a short time frame.

Legal and analytical skills

The second day tested the candidates’ legal knowledge and analytical skills. Again, there was a choice between chemistry and engineering.

Each paper started with a set of theoretical questions on, for instance, priority and expiration dates or claim interpretation. Participants said afterwards that they found this part quite difficult, and that they would normally look up that kind of information. The general idea behind these questions is that – even if you usually look up the answers – you should know where to do so, and understand the details of what you find. In future exams, participants will get more information about what will be asked from them, so that they can prepare thoroughly for the theoretical part. Candidates also had to make a selection from some documents provided for two different cases, and explain why they made the selection they did. Overall, it seemed that this exam was easier to do than the first paper, since many participants had finished within the seven hours.

No formal breaks were scheduled, so participants could divide their time among the questions and cases as they preferred. In practice, they left the room only briefly to eat or drink something, and quickly returned to continue with their work. It was impressive to see all these volunteers work so hard. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.

Results in six months

The project team has indicated it will probably take about six months for them to mark all the exams. There will be an analysis of the participants’ background based on data collected via a pre-exam survey. Candidates also completed a post-exam questionnaire which will give the organisers guidance as to possible improvements. Initial oral feedback seems to indicate that the exams were tough, but had roughly the right set-up and level. If this is confirmed by the outcomes, it will mean a big step forward in this project.

More information

The Confederacy of European Patent Information User Groups (CEPIUG) and the Patent Documentation Group (PDG) are leading the efforts to introduce certification for patent information specialists.

You can write to CEPIUG at secretary@cepiug.org.

Search Matters 2012

The EPO’s annual showcase of patent searching expertise will take place on 19 and 20 March 2012 in The Hague. This two-day seminar typically attracts experienced patent search professionals from industry, providing them with unrivalled access to the know-how and talent of EPO patent examiners working in a variety of technical fields. The programme includes eight lectures on the latest developments in patent classification, search tools and databases and 24 workshops (from which each participant will be invited to choose six), all run by highly skilled examiners and experts.

There will also be an opportunity for a limited number of participants to have direct interaction with examiners at their desks to exchange strategic insights and share best practice.

Demand will be high, and places are limited to just 200 participants, so don’t delay! Registration is open from now until 24 February 2012. For more information, including the draft programme, the lecture and workshop abstracts, and how to register and pay online, go to www.epo.org/search-matters.

Search Matters is designed for experienced searchers. If you have less than two years’ experience or are from one of the national patent offices we recommend that you consider other EPO patent search training events.

www.epo.org/search-matters
Public consultation on review of Hong Kong patent system

The public and stakeholders are invited to submit comments on a review of the current patent system in Hong Kong by 31 December 2011. Key issues for consultation include whether Hong Kong should originally grant its own standard patents (20-year term), whether the current re-registration system of EP, GB and CN patents should be maintained, and whether the system of short-term patents (8-year term) should be retained and, if so, how to improve it.

The consultation paper and information on how to submit comments can be found on the Hong Kong government’s website at www.cedb.gov.hk/citb/en/Hot_Topic/popup_20111004.html.

China to be part of PCT minimum documentation from 1 July 2012

Chinese patent literature will soon form part of the PCT minimum documentation and will then have to be included in patentability searches for patent applications under the PCT. The amendment to the corresponding Rule 34 of the Regulations under the PCT will apply to any international application (irrespective of its international filing date) for which an international search is carried out on or after 1 July 2012. More information: www.wipo.int/meetings/en/details.jsp?meeting_id=23139.

Digital version of Pakistan Trade Marks Journal


Disclosure of prior art mandatory in Korea as of 1 July 2011

Following a revision of the Korean Patent Act and Utility Model Act, it is now mandatory for all patent and utility model applications filed from 1 July 2011 onwards to cite prior art information in the description in relation to the invention specified in the claims. Failure to do so will lead to the application being refused. Applicants may respond to a refusal by filing an amendment and adding the prior art information at a later stage.

The references must be divided into "patent literature" and "non-patent literature". It is not necessary to describe the content of the cited prior art in detail. It is sufficient to refer to these documents by the number of a patent or by the title and date of publication.

For more information see KIPO news of 28 June 2011 at www.kipo.go.kr (Korean only).

New fees and forms in Singapore

The Singapore Patent Office (IPOS) introduced fee adjustments and some new forms on 1 December 2011. The fee increases - the first since 2007 – mainly concern trade mark registration, patent search and examination, and international patent applications entering the national phase in Singapore. Further information and a summary of the new fees and associated forms are available on the IPOS website at www.igos.gov.sg/topNav/svc/New+Fees+and+Form.htm.

Free English C-PAT Search to be discontinued

SIPO’s Intellectual Property Publishing House (IPPH) has recently launched a new fee-based database known as CNIPR Search which offers subscribers a number of advanced search functions in English. The C-PAT Search database is still available via the old link, but will be discontinued in the near future. Document retrieval, English legal status information, machine translation, cross-lingual search, design search and other features will then only be available subject to the payment of a subscription.

For more information see http://english.cnipr.com/.

For alternative ways of searching Chinese patent information free of charge, visit the “Searching in databases” section on the EPO website at www.epo.org/searching/asian/china/search.html or contact asiainfo@epo.org.

KIPO to liberalise application formats in accordance with PLT

The Korean Patent Office (KIPO) is currently working on a comprehensive reform of the Korean Patent Law with the aim of bringing existing legislation into line with the requirements of the Patent Law Treaty (PLT), which KIPO plans to join by 2013.

The draft bill, presented on 22 July 2011, permits filings in different languages and formats. The patent law reform is expected to enter into force in late 2012.

For more information see KIPO news of 20 July 2011 at www.kipo.go.kr (Korean only).

e-filing of trade mark applications now mandatory in India

The Indian government’s Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) has published a notification concerning the amendment of the Trade Mark Rules 2002. The amendment makes it mandatory to file trade mark applications electronically.


For more news from Asia see the “Updates” section on the EPO website at www.epo.org/asia.
Singapore

In Patent Information News issue 2/2011, we looked at patent information from Singapore, including the ePatents and SurfIP databases. This article deals with the patent system in Singapore in more detail.

Singapore and the IP system

Upon gaining independence in 1963, the former British colony of Singapore joined the independent Federation of Malaysia. In 1965, it seceded from the Federation of Malaysia to form a separate independent sovereign state.

Replacing the previous system of re-registration of patents granted by the UK Patent Office or European patents valid in the UK, the Patents Act of 1994 (effective from 23 February 1995) governs protection of industrial property in Singapore today. More detailed legislation is covered by the Patents Rules, the Patents (Patent Agents) Rules and the Patents (Composition of Offences) Regulations. A special feature of the Singapore patent system is that a patent application can proceed to grant even if the search report is adverse, as Singapore adopts a self-assessment system which puts the onus on applicants to ensure that their patent claims meet patentability requirements.

The effectiveness of IP protection in Singapore is generally regarded as among the best in Asian countries. Continuous public awareness campaigns by the government contribute to the attractiveness of Singapore for foreign investment.

In recent years, Singapore has positioned itself as a hub for IP services in the region, particularly in the areas of training, infrastructure and alternative dispute resolution.

Patent trends in Singapore

Singapore patent filings are dominated by foreign applicants, with just under 10% of patent applications filed by domestic Singapore applicants. In 2010, the top foreign applicants were the US, Japan, Germany and Switzerland. Roughly two-thirds of the applications came in via the PCT route.

Some facts on the patent system in Singapore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patent authority</strong></td>
<td>Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS) <a href="http://www.ipos.gov.sg">www.ipos.gov.sg</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of industrial property right</strong></td>
<td>Patents, trade marks, designs, plant varieties, geographical indications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration/term of protection</strong></td>
<td>20 years from the filing date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extension of duration</strong></td>
<td>Extension (max. five years) of patent term possible since 1 July 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allowable language</strong></td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication of application</strong></td>
<td>Applications are laid open to public inspection 18 months after filing or priority date; applications are published in the Patents Journal (<a href="http://www.epatents.gov.sg">www.epatents.gov.sg</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantive examination</strong></td>
<td>Three options: (1) Applicant requests search and examination locally at IPOS. (2) Applicant submits final search and examination results or copy of granted patent of a corresponding application. (3) Applicant submits search results of a corresponding application and only requests examination at IPOS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fast-track examination</strong></td>
<td>A two-track application system was introduced on 1 July 2004. The fast track system is default, but the applicant can opt for the slow track by requesting extension of periods within 39 months from filing date or priority date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time limits for request for search and examination</strong></td>
<td>13 months from the filing or priority date (search request), 21 months from the filing or priority date (examination request), 39 months from the filing or priority date (search and examination request under slow track system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time limits for request for grant/payment of grant fee</strong></td>
<td>42 months from the filing or priority date (default fast track), or 60 months from the filing or priority date (slow track)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Opposition is not available, but applicant or third party may request post-grant search and examination on the grounds that the examiner did not consider all relevant prior art, or that at least one claim in the granted patent was not examined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invalidation</strong></td>
<td>Any party may seek revocation of a patent from the Registrar; the Registrar may revoke a patent ex officio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Payment of annual fees</strong></td>
<td>Annual renewal fees are due from the end of the fourth year from the date of filing, and then yearly. For patents granted after the fourth year from the filing date, the annual renewal fees are payable within three months of the grant date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grace period for annual fees</strong></td>
<td>Six months extension can be obtained (surcharge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restoration of lapsed patent</strong></td>
<td>Within 30 months from the lapse date (= missed due date of annual fee payment)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) The Intellectual Property Office of Singapore has outsourced substantive examination to the Austrian, Danish and Hungarian patent offices.
3) Corresponding applications in English are accepted from the patent offices of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, UK, US and from the EPO.
Singapore patent applications (2001-2010)

![Graph showing the evolution of Singapore patents, domestic vs. foreign applications, direct vs. PCT route, 2001-2010.](source: www.ipos.gov.sg/topNav/pub/Statistics.htm)

**Figure 1:** Evolution of Singapore patents, domestic vs. foreign applications, direct applications vs. PCT route, 2001 - 2010

**Singapore – quick facts**
- Country code: SG
- Patent law: effective since February 1995
- Earlier system: registration of UK patents and European patents validated in the UK
- PCT route available since February 1995
- Electronic filing of patent applications since 2003
- Part of the ASEAN Patent Examination Co-operation (ASPEC) programme
- Host of Europe-Asia Patent and Patent Information Conference (EAPIC)
- Most recent law amendment: 9 October 2010
- New fees and forms from December 2011

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**EPO DATA**

**Raw data – changes to our product range and contact e-mail**

**New e-mail address for Patent Data Services**

Please send all your questions about raw data products and OPS to patentdata@epo.org. The inpadoc-services@epo.org, ops@epo.org and infowien@epo.org addresses are no longer in use.

**New raw data products added to the line-up**

- The consolidated Register backfile (Product 14.1), including all weekly updates from 1978 until week 18/2011 in XML format, is now available to order. Yearly extractions of the full backfile are planned for the future.

- A completely new product, introduced earlier this year, is the EP-A and EP-B backfile containing all existing European patent documents in PDF/A format (Product 14.13). This format is ideal for archiving purposes. Due to the rich metadata provided (according to EPO PDF profile 1.7) it will be appealing for other uses too.

- All European patent documents will soon be available in rich XML format (WIPO St. 36). This long-awaited product, containing around 800 000 documents published between 1980 and 2005 (compressed into 80 GB), will go on sale from the beginning of 2012. XML-formatted EP-B documents from 2006 and EP-A documents from 1978 are already available.

**Products to be discontinued**

As of January 2012, the EPO will consolidate its range of raw data products as follows:


- Translated English abstracts for EP documents (Product 14.5) are included in the DOCDB master database (Product 14.7) and will thus also be discontinued, as happened with the old REFI and non-patent literature products.

- The content of the WO full-text database (Product 14.18) can now be acquired direct from WIPO, so this product will also be suspended at the end of 2011.

**Coming up in 2012**

What else is the EPO planning for 2012? Here’s a hint: there will soon be a new product on sale called “Sequence Listings”.

For other cooked, half-cooked or raw data choices on the menu, check out the EPO product and services information at www.epo.org/searching/subscription.html.
WIPO Re:Search platform

Neglected tropical diseases are in focus on WIPO’s new Re:Search sharing platform. Designed for the global health research community, it aims to promote the development of new drugs, vaccines and diagnostics to treat neglected tropical diseases, malaria and tuberculosis. Go to www.wipo.int/research.

Training programme 2012

The EPO’s patent information training programme caters for beginners and advanced users alike. You can choose between online “virtual classroom” seminars or courses that take place at the EPO’s offices in Vienna. The 2012 patent information seminar programme is now available. Further virtual classroom events will be announced during the year.

For more details of these and other events, see www.epo.org/pi-training or contact Patent Information Training at pitraining@epo.org.

World Patent Information

The latest issue (Volume 33, Issue 4, 2011) of this international journal is now available, with articles on a range of topics, including the EPO’s ‘Raising the Bar’ initiative.

The editor, Mike Blackman, is always pleased to receive articles to be considered for publication in the journal. He can be contacted at mblackmanwpi@tiscali.co.uk. www.elsevier.com/locate/worpatin.

EPO Patent Information Conference 2012: Save the date!

The EPO Patent Information Conference 2012 will take place from 6 to 8 November 2012 at the Hotel Grand Elysée in Hamburg, Germany. Don’t forget to put it in your calendar!

Online newsflashes from the EPO

Our monthly online patent information newsflashes bring you the latest news and updates on patent information topics. You can follow the online newflash at 10.00 hrs on every last Thursday of the month (except August and December). Go to www.epo.org/pi-training.