SCIT.ATR.PI.2008.GB

Annual Technical Report 2008 on Patent Information Activities submitted by United Kingdom (SCIT/ATR/PI/2008/GB)

Where URLs are requested below, it is preferred that either URLs which are likely to remain stable over time (three years or more) are provided, or home (main) page URLs are provided with a short explanation of how to access the corresponding information.

The term "patent" covers utility models and Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPCs). Offices which issue design patents should report their design patent information activities in their Annual Technical Reports on Industrial Design Information Activities.

I. Evolution of patent activities

Changes experienced in terms of application filings and grants with respect to the previous year

Applications for national UK patents went down from 24,999 in 2007 to 23,379 in 2008 (-6.5 %). Applications from UK residents fell slightly from 17,375 to 16,523 (-4.9 %). Patents granted fell from 5,930 to 5,360 from 2007 to 2008 (-9.6 %).

Trends or areas experiencing rapid changes with respect to the previous year

We do not have an entry for this information for 2008.

URLs of web pages of the Office's website that provide statistics related to patents

Statistics related to patents at the Intellectual Property Office can be accessed through the annual reports, annual reviews and facts and figures at:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/ourpublications-review.htm

II. Matters concerning the generation, reproduction, distribution and use of primary and secondary sources of patent information

Publishing, printing, copying (main types of publications of the Office in the field of patent information, etc.)

(1) Paper

A-documents

These are prepared by an outside printer who operates a 5 week publication cycle. The front page is compiled by downloading bibliographic data (ASCII with special characters) from the corporate database OPTICS to the Internet for collection by the external printer. The data is composed using XICS (Xerox Integrated Composition System), a bespoke system of Xerox. The abstract text is OCR scanned, added, and any abstract drawings are scanned and merged to finalise the front page. The finished front page is added to the rest of the specification and reproduced.

The completed A-documents are then scanned in WIPO Standard ST.33 format and are transferred via Secure File Transfer Protocols (SFTP) to both the Intellectual Property Office and EPO. This is done on a weekly basis and includes a separate file for the OCR'd Abstracts.

B-Documents

These are prepared by an outside printer who operates a 5 week publication cycle. The front page is compiled by downloading bibliographic data (ASCII with special characters) from the corporate database OPTICS to the Internet for collection by the external printer. The data is composed using XICS (Xerox Integrated Composition System), a bespoke system of Xerox. The finished page is added to the rest of the specification and reproduced.

The completed B-documents are then scanned in WIPO Standard ST.33 format and are transferred via Secure File Transfer Protocols (SFTP) to both the Intellectual Property Office and EPO. This is done on a weekly basis.

(2) CD-ROM

In association with the EPO, we publish GB A-documents on CD-ROM on a fortnightly basis, ESPACE-UK. The CD-Rom collection covers the years 1979 to date, i.e. for GB serial numbers in excess of 2,000,000.

In conjunction with the EPO and other National Offices, an ESPACE ACCESS EPC CD-ROM is produced containing the bibliographic data of published applications on a monthly basis.

(3) Patents and Designs Journal (PDJ) and the new On-line e-Patents Journal

Up until March 2008 the official notices and selected bibliographic data relating to UK patent applications and granted patents are published in the official weekly electronic newspaper called the Patents and Designs Journal on the date of publication. The 2008 (PDJ) Journal, with coverage up to 26 March, appears on our website in PDF format. From 5 March 2008 the Journal is now searchable online, may be downloaded in XML, and includes a backfile of the UK Applications Filed Section from 26 July 2006. The new ePatents Journal and archived PDJs may be accessed from:

http://www.ipo.gov.uk/pro-types/pro-patent/pro-p-os/pro-p-journal/p-pj-data.htm

(4) ESPACENET, EPOQUE etc

The full text, drawings and bibliographic data of all newly published UK patent applications and granted patents is published on the EPOQUE system soon after the domestic publication date. Esp@cenet is a free internet service which contains a number of different patent collections including all GB applications published since 1978, granted patents published since 1st June 2002 (both collections on the GB database), and earlier GB patents published from 1895 (Worldwide database), please see http://gb.espacenet.com/.

Main types of announcements of the Office in the field of patent information

Our website (www.ipo.gov.uk) plays an increasingly important part in the dissemination of notices regarding patents and other IPR. In particular we frequently hold consultations with our community of users. However, we continue to place such announcements in our on-line e-Patents Journal, which is available without charge on our website. Our website received, on average, over 2 million page views per month in 2008.

Mass storage media used (paper, microforms, optical storage, etc.)

The office has a DVD and CD-ROM collection containing published/granted US, WO, EP and GB documents on CIMS (Computerised Image Management System), which can produce paper copies of documents for use internally at the IPO.

The office used to have a classified paper collection of GB documents, with some WO and EP documents classified on the UK Key between certain dates. However this collection has been disposed of, in favour of online retrieval and searching using EPOQUE.

Word processing and office automation

We use Microsoft Windows XP which provides an integrated and extensive network of applications that are available to all staff. All staff have their own personal workstation on which numerous applications are available. Word processing can be carried out using Word 2007; Powerpoint and Excel are also available; all classification keys used by the examining staff (UK Key, ECLA, ICO, IPC, USPC and Japanese F- and FI-Terms) are accessible, as are office notices, manuals, search tools including access to online databases, internal and external telephone directories, translation software, management and administration information etc. There is also a corporate mainframe database (OPTICS), a VB.NET database (PAFS) for recording file movement data and examining group statistics, and automated production of search and examination reports using the PROSE system. In 2006, we introduced our PECS system of electronic case files, whereby all the documents relating to patent applications are available electronically to examiners at their desktop. The Office intranet contains a very large collection of essential information for staff, including search and classification tools.

Copies of US, EP, WO and GB documents cited in search reports are produced by the in-house Computerised Image Management System (CIMS) for supply to applicants, and in addition this system has been extended to enable the ad hoc ordering by technical staff of any types of patent documentation, direct from their desktop. All staff have access to the Internet and to the office intranet and have their own e-mail (via Microsoft Outlook) and official e-mail address.

(New) techniques used for the generation of patent information (printing, recording, photocomposing, Optical Character Recognition (OCR), etc.)

See "Publishing, printing, copying etc.".

URLs of web pages of the Office's website that provide access to online publication of patent documents and gazettes, and to other primary and secondary sources of patent information, including patent publication servers and download of bulk patent data

The new e-Patents Journal is available online (see "(3) Patents and Designs Journal" above).

The IPOs publication server is accessible online and enables A, B and corrected publications to be searched by publication number or publication date and viewed or downloaded in PDF format:

http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent/p-find/p-find-publication.htm

III. Matters concerning abstracting, classifying, reclassifying and indexing of technical information contained in patent documents

Abstracting, reviewing, translating

Our staff can translate any document to or from English, French or German (and possibly Japanese and/or Russian) using translation software that is available at the desktop. Patent examiners check all patent abstracts provided by the applicant, and amend them when necessary to ensure that the abstract printed on the front page represents a useful search tool.

Classification[1], preclassification[2] (if applicable), and reclassification[3] activities; Classification system used, e.g., International Patent Classification (IPC), other classification (please indicate whether or not patent documents are classified by your Office and, if so, which classification is used)

We stopped applying the UKC on 1 July 2007. Some documents published after this date will still carry a UKC term because we apply classification terms at the time of the search. We continue to apply UKC terms on inventions relating to laminates and alloys.
The office no longer classifies UK patent applications on the UK Classification Key except in a small number of specific areas. All UK patent applications are classified on the IPC (8th Edition). The office does not reclassify documents. Since 2005, the office has also classified patent applications on ECLA .
In 2008, preclassification is done manually at an administrative level in accordance with the UK classification key, which provides the format for the structure of examining divisions and groups.

Coordinate indexing (domestic deep indexing systems, keyword indexing)

Some UK Key headings to which UK Patent applications have historically been classified have deep indexing schemes, with terms that are electronically searchable on OPTICS.

Hybrid system indexing

Double-purpose indexing, currently a feature of the IPC, is searchable in the usual forms in which the IPC is searched. Such schemes do not exist in the UK Key.

Bibliographic data and full-text processing

Bibliographic data, abstracts (checked by examiners) and full specifications of GB documents are uploaded via Secure File Transfer Protocols (SFTP) to EPO databases such as EPODOC on a weekly basis. This information can be searched there.

IV. Search file establishment and upkeep

File building

The office no longer possesses paper search files – see "Mass storage media" above. GB patent bibliographic data is available electronically, and may be searched, on our OPTICS database. Published GB patent specifications may be accessed and searched via EPOQUE and from our on-line publication server see "Publishing, printing, copying etc." above.

Updating

Usually updated every Wednesday.

Storage, including mass storage media

See "File building" above and "Mass storage media used" above.

Documentation from other offices maintained and/or considered part of the available search file

See "File building" above. Patent collections are searchable by online search techniques.

V. Activities in the field of computerized and other mechanized search systems

In-house systems (online/offline)

The OPTICS (Office of Patent and Trademarks Integrated Computer System) database is the only in-house system we have for searching. See "Equipment used" below. Technical searching can be carried out on single UK Key classifying or indexing terms applied before July 2007 (when we ceased classifying to the UK Key), combinations of terms from the same or different headings, etc. IPC8 terms can be searched too, as can register, legal status and other parameters.

External databases

We have a long list of external databases that we use regularly, including EPODOC, Derwent's World Patent Index, CAS ONLINE and other specialised chemical, biotech, electrical and other databases. We interrogate these databases using a number of online hosts that we subscribe to, including EPOQUE, STN and others. Our official policy is that a worldwide online search should be carried out as whole or part of every patent search done in this office. Examiners are encouraged to access National Patent Office Organisation websites as necessary to search collections of patent documents, or to retrieve family member search and examination reports (e.g. EPO, USPTO, WIPO).

Administrative management systems (e.g., register, legal status, statistics and administrative support)

Register and legal status information is stored on the OPTICS database, as are a number of types of statistics such as file sizes for UK Key marks. Examining group statistics, file movements etc. are recorded using a VB .NET system called PAFS (see AWord processing and office automation@ above). In addition, we use the EPO system 'Phoenix' to electronically store and access our patent application case files.

Equipment used (hardware, including the types of terminal and network used, and software), carriers used

Our corporate database (OPTICS) runs on a Fujitsu mainframe. The internal network uses a client-server arrangement on an Ethernet LAN running Novell Netware and a Windows Domain. Windows XP and applications are installed on Pentium client PCs with a mixture of 15", 17", 19" and 21" LCD space-saving screens. All Patents staff are provided with dual screens which can be configured for portrait or landscape orientation.

Existing online thesauri; their structure, presentation and usefulness for computerized searches

We use some EPO tools such as EPOS for finding out synonyms for helping with keyword searches, and a number of other EPO and in-house preparations. The UK Key Catchwords Index and the IPC Catchword Index are available on examiners= desktops and on paper, and other search tools, including internet-based search tools, are also available on desktops. All these tools are used regularly.

VI. Administration of the industrial property office library, and information products and services available to the public (relating to facilities, e.g., for lodging applications, for assisting clients on searching procedures, for obtaining official publications and registry extracts)

Planning, administration, automation, security, buildings

Our internal library is in our Newport office and is run by the Documentation Unit. The available collections include GB abridgements/abstracts (including Bennet-Woodcroft), copies of the UK Key and IPC, various pamphlets, manuals and other publications, some law reports, name and subject-matter indexes for locating old historic patents, official journals of the UK (Patent and Designs Journal) and of the EPO, magazines for circulations etc. Much of this information is also available on the office Intranet. The collections are located in our main building and are therefore secure.

We have a Front Office in London which is primarily used to help in lodging patent applications. There are facilities for the public, both in that office and in our main Newport office in Wales, where official publications can be obtained and where searching e.g. on the Internet can be carried out.

Collecting, acquisitions, preparation

All staff are free to suggest additional material for inclusion in our library collection, and suggestions are periodically invited by management.

Collection management, preservation

The Documentation Unit is charged with the task of maintaining our library.

Interlibrary lending, resource sharing, networks of patent libraries in the country

The British Library, located in St. Pancras, London, houses the national collection of patents, science and technology. It remains administratively separate from the UK Intellectual Property Office, and is funded by the UK Government=s Department of Culture, Media and Sport and by revenue from its services which are heavily used.

The library has telephone access to selected examiners in the Intellectual Property Office, to help with public enquiries on patent searching.

The library and the Intellectual Property Office jointly offer support to the PATLIB patent libraries, which include 14 libraries outside London, open to the public, which hold patent material. The PATLIB libraries collect most patent specifications in CD-ROM format rather than in paper or microform, although some continue to arrive on paper. Over 25 countries= patents are covered.

The British Library also continues to offer public access to commercial patent online databases. This is a priced service which handles a number of commissioned searches monthly, mostly for subject searches. It also offers public access to free databases such as esp@cenet.

Our office takes part in numerous exchange and grant programmes with other patent offices around the world as in previous years.

Information services available to the public (including computerized services and search files contained in libraries remote from your Office and patent information posted by your Office on the World Wide Web)

Our Search and Advisory Service (SAS) continued to promote its activities in providing priced non-statutory patent and trade mark investigations. Patent investigations include patentability, validity, prior art and freedom-to-operate searches or the provision of statistics about UK patenting activity - other investigations can be made according to clients' wishes. In all, 4488 patent and trademark-based searches were processed in 2008, a decrease of about 14 % over the previous 12 months; however, the trademark search service was closed on 12 December 2008. We are involved in UK award schemes for smaller technologically-oriented companies, such as the GRaD scheme which aims to enhance competitiveness by encouraging innovation. The SAS is also looking to build on its provision of commercial patentability and infringement searches. In September of 2007 a Patent Informatics service was consolidated in order to support public and private sector stakeholders by offering patent mapping and analysis.

Our call centre (Central Enquiry Unit) continues to provide a much needed service to customers, handling nearly 10,000 telephone calls and emails per month on average during 2008. Customer satisfaction is very high.

See "Interlibrary lending" for details of library services remote from our office.

URLs of web pages of the Office's website for electronic filing of patent applications

The Intellectual Property Office provides links to Intellectual Property Office web filing, epoline ™ and PCT-Safe at the following web page:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-os.htm

URLs of web pages of the Office's website that provide information on business procedures such as: filing, publication, examination and grant procedures related to patents; opposition and appeal procedures related to patents; etc.

Information on filing, including Patents application guide and other materials, is available from the following web page:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent/p-applying/p-apply.htm
The procedure after filing, including publication, examination and grant is described at:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent/p-applying/p-after.htm
Opposition and appeal procedures are described, and published decisions may be retrieved from:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent/p-decisionmaking/p-challenge.htm
Other business procedures such as the Patents Act, finding patents, how we classify and renewals are covered by web pages accessible from the Patents portal:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent.htm

URLs of web pages of the Office's website that provide a description of information products and services offered by the Office (e.g., patent search service(s) and patent databases), as well as information on how to access and utilize them

Expert search services provided by the Intellectual Property Office are described at the following web page:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent/p-find/p-find-expert.htm
These services include patentability, freedom-to-operate, validity and grant assessment searches.
The Patent Informatics service, which delivers analysis and intelligence through patent mapping is described at:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-informatic.htm
A link to GB esp@cenet is provided from the online patent services portal:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-os.htm
The UK patent register may be searched by publication or application number at:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent/p-find/p-find-number.htm
The UK patent register may be searched by publication date at:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent/p-find/p-find-publication.htm

VII. Matters concerning mutual exchange of patent documentation and information

International or regional cooperation in the exchange of machine-readable information, e.g., bibliographic data, abstract and/or full text information

We apply all relevant WIPO standards including ST.8 for machine-readable records.

Medium used for exchange of priority documents

Paper. We can accept priority documents in CD form provided they have the appropriate electronic signature.

Medium allowed for filing applications

Filings continues to be mainly on paper, but e-filing of GB applications at the Intellectual Property Office now accounts for nearly 40%. Electronically filed applications, amendments and other correspondence is loaded straight onto the PECS electronic case management system.

VIII. Other relevant matters concerning education and training in, and promotion of, the use of patent information, including technical assistance to developing countries (please indicate URLs of web pages of the Office's website wherever appropriate)

Training courses for national and foreign participants, use of audiovisual means

Nothing new since the 2004 report.

Assistance to developing countries (sending consultants and experts, receiving trainees from developing countries, etc.)

The UK Intellectual Property Office has an active programme of bilateral and other cooperation with various countries, including a number of developing countries. In 2005, the Search and Advisory Service carried out 10 free patent searches for WIPO under the programme of Patent Information Services for Developing Countries. We also deliver seminars and lectures in various places including developing countries. In July 2008 the Intellectual Property Office provided training to Examiners at the Brazilian Patent and Trademark Office (INPI) covering search and examination using EPOQUE.

Promotional activities (seminars, exhibitions, visits, advertising, etc.)

As in past years, our Awareness, Information and Media Division has continued to have a presence at many exhibitions, to give seminars and to host visits to the Office. In order to get the widest possible coverage in the media, we employ a PR company whose role it is to develop newsworthy stories about a wide range of intellectual property issues and to effectively communicate them to the media, as well as having a more general liaison role with the media. In October 2007 the 'Grand Day Out' exhibition at the Science Museum was announced in conjunction with the Intellectual Property Office, opening in Spring 2009. The exhibition aims to showcase invention and innovation through cartoon characters 'Wallace and Gromit' with the aid of patents.

Studies to identify trends in new technology, e.g., by the use of patent statistics and preparation of monographs

The Patent Informatics Team is working the Technology Strategy Board, an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the UK Government, to identify and assess emerging technologies in the UK through patent mapping.

Assistance furnished by offices to facilitate the changing over of receiving offices to electronic data carriers for the exchange of patent documents (see also fourth sub-item of item VI, above)

Nothing new since the 2004 report.

IX. Other general information related to the Office that is available on the Internet -- URLs of web pages of the Office's website that:

provide information on legislation related to patents

http://www.ipo.gov.uk/patent/p-decisionmaking/p-law.htm

contain the Annual Report of the Office

Annual reports since 2003/2004 are available at:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/about/whatwedo/ourpublications/ourpublications-review.htm

if necessary, provide further information related to the topics referred to in the current ATR

n/a

provide open source codes related to patent information systems

n/a

contain patent-related news regarding the Office

IP Insight is a monthly newsletter which covers all aspects of IP including patent-related news at:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/newsletters.htm
Press releases for 2006-2008 are available at:
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/press.htm

X. Other relevant matters

Nothing new since the 2004 report.

1.	Classification is allotting one or more classification symbols (e.g., IPC symbols) to a patent application, either before or during search and examination, which symbols are then published with the patent application.
2.	Preclassification is allotting an initial broad classification symbol (e.g., IPC class or subclass, or administrative unit) to a patent application, using human or automated means for internal administrative purposes (e.g., routing an application to the appropriate examiner). Usually preclassification is applied by the administration of an office.
3.	Reclassification is the reconsideration and usually the replacement of one or more previously allotted classification symbols to a patent document, following a revision and the entry into force of a new version of the Classification system (e.g., the IPC). The new symbols are available on patent databases.