

SCIT.ATR.PI.2007.TT

Annual Technical Report 2007 on Patent Information Activities submitted by Trinidad and Tobago (SCIT/ATR/PI/2007/TT)

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

The total number of patent applications in 2007 was 319. The vast majority of these were filed by non-nationals and 98% of the total entered via the Patent Cooperation Treaty. The number of granted patents was the highest in the chemical industry followed by the oil & gas and pharmaceutical industries. Notices of grant are now published in a daily newspaper. It should be noted that other limiting factors to the number of grants issued include the speed of response by applicants to notices of payment of the search and examination fees, which initiates examination. One application was filed for a utility certificate and was from a national.

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

A change has been observed in the composition of patent applications which reflects the industrial and marketing priorities of the major industries within the country. There has been a shift from applications primarily from petroleum and natural gas exploration to pharmaceutical applications (52%). However, for granted patents, energy sector subjects comprise the majority of grants. The Intellectual Property Office has observed an average attrition rate of approximately 10% of all applications by withdrawal, lapsing due to unpaid fees or being refused after examination.

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.)

The Intellectual Property Office of Trinidad and Tobago has changed its publication method to limit publication only to a widely read newspaper upon grant. There is no early or 18 month publication as with the PCT and some other countries. These publications contain bibliographic information, the abstract and one representative drawing where possible. The Office will also provide bibliographic information on applications upon request but minus abstracts and drawings. Draft and certified paper copies of granted patents can also be ordered. Amendments, mergers, assignments and some post-grant transactions are also published in the press.

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

The Office conducts public education exercises with visits to schools, businesses, institutions and interest groups in an attempt to promulgate the value and use of patent technical information. Officers also deal with individual requests as they arise. The Office is establishing a technical library to provide public access to Internet based patent databases and patent information contained on CD and DVD ROMs such as the Espace World™ publications. Requests for patent information are fielded by the patent staff. Searches are performed in-house and some prior art searches are sent to the WIPO Patent Information Services for Developing Countries.

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

The present intellectual property legislation requires that the main records be submitted and stored on paper. However the trademark and patent records and administration are handled by an automated system and these databases are administered on an internal server with a tape backup. Patent and non-patent information from the PCT publications, US Patent and Trademark Office, Espace World and Access, French Patents Bref and Japanese patent abstracts are contained on optical disks.

Word processing and office automation

The Office is fully computerised with nearly every member of the 46-member staff having access to PCs. It is a mixed network with Microsoft Windows™ NT and 2000 servers with Microsoft Windows™ 2000 and XP Professional clients. The main office productivity software is Microsoft Office™ 2000. The trademark and patent databases are Oracle™ based and the automation features accessible by members of staff but not the public as yet.

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

Abstracting, reviewing, translating

In 2007 99% of the applications entering Trinidad and Tobago were equivalents of foreign filings and of those 91% arrived via the Patent Cooperation Treaty for national phase entry. Therefore most of the applications enter already abstracted and classified according to the International Patent Classification system. Classifications in the latest (7th) edition of the IPC would have been done for local applications and for older patents being entered into the database.

IV. Search file establishment and upkeep

File building

Presently there is a single paper file per application and this is available only to staff. Searches can be conducted by members of the public on patent registers and copies of filed documents for granted patents can also be subsequently ordered. Typically these filed documents exclude any certificates on file.

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

In-house systems (online/offline)

The internal patent database is available only to staff at present. An Internet Module for on-line searching has been developed in-house but it is not yet offered to the public until the data has been validated.

External databases

The patent examiners make extensive use of external on-line patent databases (US, Canadian, European, Japanese and Australian etc.) and pharmaceutical monographs. They also have access via jukebox to the collection of optical disks.

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

Paper Registers are generated after publication and give an enforceable date to the grant. The registers recite the entire legal status, assignments and licenses pertaining to the patent. Statistics are compiled for annual reports and to track trends in applications and grants. External statistics are occasionally tracked.

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

The PC clients are a mixture of Intel-based brand name and generic machines from 1.8GHz to 3.0GHz machines running Microsoft Windows™ 2000 and XP Professional operating systems. The network stems from a group of low-end servers running Microsoft Windows™ NT and 2000 Server connected via switches and hubs in a 10/100 Cat. 5e network. The network also operates behind a firewall.

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

The Intellectual Property Office is located on an entire floor within a building housing other departments of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. The vault is on the ground floor next to another vault but the vault area is not shared. The operations of the Intellectual Property Office are situated "behind" the front desk or Receiving Office. From the Receiving Office, inquiries for further information are channeled and persons directed to relevant members of staff or library facilities for searches of the registers to be conducted. Materials from the vault are requested by members of staff for the public to use. By and large, the office is laid out to limit the unnecessary penetration by members of the public into the heart of the operations to minimize their possible contact with confidential case files and the data servers. Besides security personnel in the ground lobby, there are also security personnel on the Office floor. The entire building has 24/7 security. The automated system and the web servers are hosted in-house to retain control and security of the physical infrastructure.

To accommodate additional staff and expanded services, premises are being refurbished for the Office.

Collection management, preservation

Physical documents are housed in an air-conditioned vault when not in use by staff. Patents are arranged according to application number but specially tagged to indicate grant status. The database and certain drives are periodically backed up on a tape drive.

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

Technical documents and case files do not leave the custody of the Intellectual Property Office for public lending or otherwise.

A technical library was established in the Intellectual Property Office primarily to provide access to patent technical information in on-line databases and the CD and DVD-ROM collections loaded into a jukebox and procedural information on plant breeders' rights. Some technical information is also available on the web site at www.ipo.gov.tt.

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)

Searches of the registers are usually conducted mainly by patent attorneys, agents and their personnel and members of the public to a lesser extent. The patent agents and companies also submit written requests for state of the art searches and infringement checks. These searches are conducted by the professional staff (patent examiners, technical information specialist). The professional and technical staff also prepare publication notices for delivery to the publishers and also prepare the certificates for the published patents and generate the registers.

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

There is presently no exchange of patent documentation. Cooperation with the European Patent Office is under consideration. Annual reports are exchanged with interested offices.

Medium used for exchange of priority documents

There is presently no systematic exchange of patent documentation. Annual reports are exchanged with interested offices.

Priority documents are exchanged upon request and in paper format only.

Medium allowed for filing applications

Applications must be filed in paper.

While the Office supports the notion of electronic filing, significant changes will have to be made to several other pieces of legislation affecting the validity of electronic documents such as electronic signatures and what constitutes evidence, to name a few. However, the Office is moving in anticipation of such changes with the establishment of the electronic databases and its participation in the formulation of the National Information Communication and Technology Plan, which embraces all of those issues for the wider public.

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

Individual consultations are conducted in the use and value of patent information. Several presentations are made to user groups, schools, chambers of commerce and individual enterprises. Also consultants, when invited to conduct staff training, are also invited to share their expertise with the legal, scientific and business community in the use of patent information.

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

The Trinidad and Tobago Intellectual Property Office, because of its level of development, hosts, in an on-going fashion, many study visits by personnel from other developing countries. Also its professional and technical staff are frequently asked by WIPO to conduct missions to the other countries in the Caribbean to deal with needs assessment, trademarks, PCT, patent examination and automation issues.

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

Every year about 4 major national and/or regional activities are hosted, often in conjunction with WIPO. The weeks preceding World Intellectual Property Day are used to host several activities culminating in an open house display at the Office. Several other smaller consultations are hosted in-house for interest groups and other stakeholders. Articles produced by the staff are also published in the press and trade publications and radio and television appearances are occasionally made by the staff.

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

X. Other relevant matters

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.