

CWS.ATR.PI.2010.GB

Annual Technical Report 2010 on Patent Information Activities submitted by United Kingdom (CWS/ATR/PI/2010/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 22,465 in 2009 to 21,929 in 2010 (-2.4 %). Applications from UK residents fell slightly from 15,985 to 15,194 (-4.9 %). The number of Patents granted increased from 5,428 in 2008 to 5,594 in 2009 (+3.1 %).

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

We do not have an entry for this information for 2010.

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 (xml format) 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 (xml format) 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.

Corrected 'Errata'-Documents (A8, A9, B8 & C)

These are prepared by an outside printer who operates a 2 week publication cycle. The front page is compiled by downloading bibliographic data (xml format) 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 Errata-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.

The A, B and Errata documents are now available on-line from the Publication server and are free to download on the day of Publication.

<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-os/p-find/p-find-publication.htm>

(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.

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

Up until 26th March 2008 the official notices and selected bibliographic data relating to UK patent applications and granted patents were published in the official weekly electronic newspaper called the Patents and Designs Journal (PDJ) on the date of publication, and are available on our website in PDF format. From 5 March 2008 the new e-Patents Journal became searchable online, and may be downloaded in PDF or XML formats. It also includes a backfile of the UK Applications Filed Section from 26 July 2006. The new Patents 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. All GB applications published since 1978 and granted patents published since 1st June 2002 are available through both the GB and Worldwide databases. Earlier GB patents published from 1895 are available through the 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 important role 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, 2.2 million page views per month during 2010, of which 15,500 thousand were for the e-Patents Journal.

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 patent applications on CIMS (Computerised Image Management System). CIMS can be used to produce paper copies of these documents for internal use.

The office previously maintained a paper collection of GB documents, with some WO and EP documents classified according to the (now discontinued) UK Key between certain dates. However, this collection has been disposed of in favour of online searching and retrieval 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 computer on which numerous applications are available. Word processing can be carried out using Word 2007; PowerPoint and Excel are also available; all major classification keys that are used by the examiners are also accessible via EPOQUE, 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. We also have 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 (PDJ)" - above).

The IPO's 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 along with other languages using translation software that is available at the desktop. Patent examiners check all patent abstracts provided by the applicant, and amend them where necessary to ensure that the abstract printed on the front page represents a useful search tool.

Classification¹, preclassification² (if applicable), and reclassification³ 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)

All UK patent applications are classified to the advanced level of the IPC. The office does not reclassify documents. Since 2005, the office has also classified patent applications to ECLA. Preclassification is done manually at an administrative level in accordance with ECLA subclasses, which provides the basis for the structure of examining divisions and groups.

Coordinate indexing (domestic deep indexing systems, keyword indexing)

UK patent applications relating to laminates (broadly equivalent to IPC subclass B32B) are indexed to the European Patent Office System 26 and made available on the EPOQUE database RM26.

Hybrid system indexing

Double-purpose indexing, currently a feature of the IPC, is searchable in the usual manner 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 does not possess paper search files* (see "Mass storage media used" - 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.

* The Office holds a limited paper file collection of Irish patent specifications published before 2000 which may not be held on any EPOQUE database. These are classified according to the IPC and available for consideration by examiners.

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 patent applications according to the UK Key), combinations of terms from the same or different headings, etc. IPC 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. Examining group statistics, file movements etc. are recorded using a VB.NET system called PAFS (see "Word processing and office automation" above). In addition, we use the EPO system 'Phoenix' to electronically store and access our patent application case files which we call PECS.

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 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 synonyms to aid keyword searches, and a number of other EPO and in-house preparations. Electronic and paper versions of the UK Key Catchwords Index and the IPC Catchword Index are available to examiners, together with other search tools, including internet-based search tools. All of 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 located at our Newport office and is run by the Documentation Unit. The available collections include: historical GB abridgements/abstracts (including Bennet-Woodcroft); historical copies of the UK Key and IPC; various pamphlets, manuals and other publications; law reports; name and subject-matter indexes for locating old historic patents; historical 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.

Our main office is located in Newport, Wales, where the public can obtain official publications and conduct searches using Espacenet for example. In addition we also have a front office in London where customers can file applications

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 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 13 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. Patents from over 25 countries 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 its activities in providing priced non-statutory patent investigations. These include patentability, validity, prior art and freedom-to-operate searches, and the provision of statistics about UK patenting activity. In all, 719 patent searches were processed in 2010. This is lower than in previous years as a result of the decision to close the Regional Development Agencies (RDA's) who commissioned the assessment of research and development grant applications.

Demand for the relatively new service of Patent Informatics has continued to grow with requests being received from both the public and private sectors. In addition we also provided a limited number of facilitated mediation services for parties in dispute over IP matters.

Our Information Centre continues to provide a much needed service to customers, handling on average 8000 telephone calls and 800 emails per month. The call volume has fallen by 11% since the previous calendar year in part as a result of answering a greater proportion of customer's queries in the first instance. Work is ongoing to identify where contact could have been avoided by improving the service offered through more cost effective channels for example on our website. Satisfaction with the service remains high at around 99%.

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>

Information regarding dispute resolution, including hearings, mediation and opinions may be found here:
<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-dispute.htm>

Results of past patent decisions are available at:
<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/pro-types/pro-patent/pro-p-os/p-challenge-decision-results.htm>

Information on how applicants may appeal is provided at:
<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/p/appeal.htm>

Other business procedures such as the Patents Act, finding patents, how we classify and renewals are covered by web pages accessible from the main 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 including patentability, freedom-to-operate, validity and grant assessment searches 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>

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 also 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.

In October 2009 we launched a Patents Digital Access Service for the digital preparation and transfer of patent priority documents to WIPO. The new service is free to electronic filers and will benefit both UK business and the IP community. The new service automatically prepares digital patent priority documents and securely stores them at WIPO for future use. This new service removes the financial burden on our customers who currently pay National IP Offices to prepare priority documents for filing at other IP offices. Please see the following link for further information <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/pro-types/pro-patent/pro-p-os/pro-p-apply-online-pdas.htm>.

Medium allowed for filing applications

Filings continue on paper, but electronic filing now accounts for over 50% of GB patent applications filed at the Intellectual Property Office. Electronically filed applications, amendments and other correspondence is loaded directly 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 cooperation with various countries, including a number of developing countries. In 2010, the Search and Advisory Service carried out 5 free patent searches for WIPO under the programme of Patent Information Services for Developing Countries.

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

Our Business Outreach and Education (BOE) Division continues to raise awareness of IP so that more businesses know what they need to do to realise value from their ideas. This work is done through a combination of online resources, use of the website, regional advice events, and the training of intermediaries who multiply our reach.

We continue to communicate IP awareness to young people, partnering with Aardman to provide online resources for young people and educators to raise awareness of innovation, creativity and intellectual property amongst 4 - 16 year olds. This is delivered through the Cracking Ideas website in the format of resource packs with links to education curriculums, IP challenges, games and a nationwide competition designed to encourage children to be innovative, enterprising and create new ideas.

All marketing and PR is carried out within the BOE team and we are successfully achieving coverage in a variety of regional and national media channels.

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

Nothing new to report since 2009.

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)

The UK Intellectual Property Office has an active programme of cooperation with various countries, including a number of developing countries. In 2010, the Search and Advisory Service carried out 5 free patent searches for WIPO under the programme of Patent Information Services for Developing Countries.

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

All 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/news/newsletters/ipinsight.htm>

IPO press releases dating from 2006 are available at:
<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/about/press/press-release.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.