CWS/ATR/PI/2014/GB

Annual Technical Report on Patent Information Activities in 2014 submitted by UK Intellectual Property Office

I. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN PATENT INFORMATION ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE OFFICE

Outline of main policies and plans aimed at development of patent information activities and expected time frames for their realization

The Office is seeking to undertake a major programme of work to review the business processes and IT systems which support the delivery of patent rights to customers. This work will include migrating data and functionality from the existing mainframe system to a modern alternative. It is envisaged this will provide a number of benefits including improving our service offering to customers with more services offered electronically, greater integration between systems and more flexibility to provide new services in future.

The work will be divided into a number of small projects which it is anticipated will be delivered over the next few years.

New projects launched or resumed this year in the context of the policies and plans mentioned above, short description: aims, partners, tasks

See entry above in relation to the development of patent information activities.

Main areas of patent information activities and related information and communication technology (ICT) practices which were in the focus of attention last year

See entry above in relation to the development of patent information activities.

Statistics: changes in terms of application filings and grants with respect to previous year; trends or areas experiencing rapid changes

Applications for national UK patents went up from 22,936 in 2013 to 23,040 in 2014 (+0.5%). Of these, applications from UK residents increased from 65.2% to 65.9%. The number of Patents granted decreased from 5235 in 2013 to 4986 in 2014 (-4.8%).

Other matters and useful links (URLs): annual report of the Office, news page, statistics, etc.

Our website www.ipo.gov.uk moved in October 2014 to a new Government website GOV.UK and the new web address is now: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office

Statistics related to patents at the Intellectual Property Office can be accessed through the annual reports, annual reviews and facts and figures at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics?departments%5B%5D=intellectual-property-office

Information on filing, including Patents application guide and other materials, is available from the following web page: https://www.gov.uk/patent-your-invention

The procedure after filing, including publication, examination and grant is described at: https://www.gov.uk/patent-your-invention

Information regarding dispute resolution, including hearings, mediation and opinions may be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/intellectual-property-mediation

https://www.gov.uk/opinions-resolving-patent-disputes

Results of past patent decisions are available at: https://www.ipo.gov.uk/p-challenge-decision-results.htm

Information on how applicants may appeal is provided at:

https://www.gov.uk/patent-disputes-resolution-hearings

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:

https://www.gov.uk/topic/intellectual-property/patents

A link to the EPO search dataset Espacenet is provided from the online patent services portal:

https://www.gov.uk/search-for-patent

The UK patent register may be searched by publication or application number at:

https://www.ipo.gov.uk/p-ipsum.htm

The UK patent register may also be searched by publication date at:

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

II. SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PATENT INFORMATION CARRIED OUT BY THE OFFICE

Information and support provided by the Office to applicants regarding filing on paper and/or e-filing (instructions, seminars, etc.) - URLs

Information on filing, including Patents application guide and other materials, is available from the following web page:

https://www.gov.uk/topic/intellectual-property/patents

Availability of the application dossier in electronic form

The UK patent register and some of the documents from may be searched by publication or application number at:

https://www.ipo.gov.uk/p-ipsum.htm

Classification[1], preclassification[2] (if applicable), reclassification[3] activities; classification systems used (e.g., International Patent Classification (IPC)); matters concerning indexing of patent information

All UK patent applications are classified to the IPC. The office does not reclassify documents. Since 2005 the office has also classified patent applications to ECLA and subsequently CPC from November 2013.

Pre-Classification is done manually at an administrative level in accordance with CPC subclasses, which provides the basis for the structure of examining divisions and groups.

Abstracting, reviewing, and translation of the information contained in patent documents

Our staff can translate any document to or from English, French or German along with other languages using translation software made available by the European Patent Office and other national patent offices. 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.

Other activities

None to report.

III. SOURCES OF PATENT INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE

Main types of publications of the Office (patent applications, full text, first pages, abstracts, bibliographic data, granted patents, etc.), medium (on paper, on CDs, online - URLs)

(1) PDF

A-documents

These are prepared in-house in a 5 week publication cycle using a bespoke IT system linked to PDAX (the IPO's electronic case management system). The front page is compiled by downloading bibliographic data (XML format) from the corporate database OPTICS and is married with the abstract text from our internal examiner database (PROSE). The abstract drawing is extracted from PDAX and merged to finalise the front page. The finished front page is added to the rest of the specification pages from PDAX and reproduced in a single PDF image. The PDF image is then loaded onto the IPO's publication server on our external website for customer download. The IPO no longer publishes "A" documents in paper format, the official publication means being electronic (please see the following link):

https://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-os/p-find/p-find-publication.htm).

The PDF A documents are then transferred via Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) to the EPO. This is done on a weekly basis and includes a separate ST.36 XML file for the bibliographical and full text abstract data.

B-Documents

These are prepared in-house in a 5 week publication cycle using a bespoke IT system linked to PDAX (the IPO's electronic case management system). The front page is compiled by downloading bibliographic data (XML format) from the corporate database OPTICS and merged with the rest of the specification pages from PDAX and reproduced in a single PDF image. The PDF image is then loaded onto the IPO's publication server on our external website for customer download. The IPO no longer publishes "B" documents in paper format; the official publication means being electronic (see the following link): https://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-os/p-find/p-find-publication.htm).

The PDF B documents are then transferred via Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) to the EPO. This is done on a weekly basis and includes a separate ST.36 XML file for the bibliographical data.

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

These are prepared in-house in a 2 week publication cycle using a bespoke IT system linked to PDAX (the IPO's electronic case management system). The front page is compiled by downloading bibliographic data (XML format) from the corporate database OPTICS and merged with the rest of the specification pages from PDAX and reproduced in a single PDF image. The PDF image is then loaded onto the IPO's publication server on our external website for customer download. The IPO no longer publishes "errata" documents in paper format, the official publication means being electronic (please see the following link: https://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/patent/p-os/p-find/p-find-publication.htm).

The PDF Errata documents are then transferred via Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) to the EPO. This is done on a weekly basis and includes a separate ST.36 XML file for the bibliographical data.

(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 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 e-Patents Journal became searchable online, and may be downloaded in PDF or XML formats. It also includes a back-file of the UK applications filed section from 26 July 2006. The Patents Journal and archived PDJs may be accessed from:

https://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.

Espacenet is a free internet service which contains a number of different patent collections. GB patents published from 1895 and Granted from 2002 are available through the worldwide database, please see: https://worldwide.espacenet.com/

Official Gazettes: main types of announcements, frequency of publication, medium (on paper, on CDs, online - URL), etc.

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 e-Patents Journal became searchable online, and may be downloaded in PDF or XML formats. It also includes a back-file of the UK applications filed section from 26 July 2006. The Patents Journal and archived PDJs may be accessed from:

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

In relation to the dissemination of more general notices regarding patents and other IPR, our website: (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office) plays an important role. 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.

Website statistics are available here: https://www.gov.uk/performance/site-activity-intellectual-property-office

Information products and patent document collections (coverage, medium, etc.) available to examiners, including external collections and 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 EPOQUEnet, STN and others. Our official policy is that a worldwide search should be carried out as 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).

Information products and patent document collections (coverage, medium, etc.) available to external users, conditions of access (e.g., free of charge, subscription, etc.)

A collection of historical documents is located at our Newport office and maintained 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; and historical official journals of the UK (Patent and Designs Journal) and of the EPO. 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.

Legal status information (kind of information, coverage, medium, etc.)

Legal status information is contained on the UK patent register and may be searched by publication or application number at:

https://www.ipo.gov.uk/p-ipsum.htm

This data is complete for all UK national applications in force in the UK and granted EP(UK) applications which are in force.

Other sources

Nothing to report.

IV. ICT SUPPORT TO SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PATENT INFORMATION CARRIED OUT BY THE OFFICE

Specific software tools supporting business procedures within the Office: general description, characteristics, advantages, possible improvements

We use Microsoft Windows 7 which provides an integrated and extensive network of applications that are available to all staff. The desktop environment is provided by virtual machines running on a server which are accessed via thin clients rather than desktop PCs. Word processing can be carried out using Word 2007; all other MS Office applications, including Outlook for e mail and PowerPoint and Excel are available; all major classification keys that are used by the examiners 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. We also have a PDAX electronic case file system 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 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.

Hardware used to supporting business processes of the Office

Our corporate database (OPTICS) runs on a Fujitsu mainframe. Staff access their Windows 7 desktops via thin clients (WYSE terminals) which are connected to 24 inch wide screen monitors.

Internal databases: coverage, updates, interlinks with external sources

Register and legal status information is stored on our 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 previous entry above). In addition, we use an in house system called PDAX to electronically store and access our patent application case files. The databases referred to are updated continuously and views of the data contained on OPTICS and PDAX are made externally available via our website.

Establishment and maintenance of electronic search file: file building, updating, storage, documents from other offices included in the search file

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 "Main types of publication....." above.

Administrative management electronic systems (register, legal status, statistics, and administrative support)

See entry in relation to internal databases.

Other matters

Nothing to report.

V. PROMOTION ACTIVITIES AIMED TO SUPPORT USERS IN ACCESS AND EFFICIENT USE OF PATENT INFORMATION

Patent library: equipment, collection management, network of patent libraries in the country, cooperation with foreign patent libraries

Our Documentation Unit is charged with the task of maintaining our library and seeks the views of staff to identify additional material for inclusion in our subscriptions.

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 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. 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 Espacenet.

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

Publications related to different business procedures and patent information sources available to users, for example, books, brochures, Internet publications, etc.

A collection of historical documents is located at our Newport office and maintained 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; and historical official journals of the UK (Patent and Designs Journal) and of the EPO. 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.

Office's initiatives on providing foreign patent information in the local language(s) (e.g., machine translation tools, translation of abstracts)

Nothing to report.

Cooperation with universities, research centers, technology and innovation support centers, etc.

Our Business Outreach and Education Team continues to raise awareness of IP giving businesses that could be more successful through better use of IP, access to informed advice and support that enables them to use, manage, and enforce their IP to its fullest potential.

This is done via a portfolio of business tools including mobile and online resources, seminars, workshops and training, working with partners to deliver broader dissemination and understanding of IP

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intellectual-property-for-business

Education and training: training courses, e-learning modules (URLs), seminars, exhibitions, etc.

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.

We have introduced a new online tool for Universities (IP Tutor) helping students and lecturers understand intellectual property rights.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intellectual-property-for-universities/ip-tools-for-universities

Other activities

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.

VI. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF PATENT INFORMATION

International exchange and sharing of patent information in machine-readable form, e.g., priority documents, bibliographic data, abstracts, search reports, full text information

We apply all relevant WIPO standards including ST.8 for machine-readable records and ST.36 for xml transfer of bibliographic data.

In October 2009 we launched a Patents Digital Access Service for the digital preparation and transfer of patent priority documents to WIPO. The 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 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: https://www.ipo.gov.uk/pro-types/pro-patent/pro-p-os/pro-p-apply-online-pdas.htm.

It is also possible to exchange priority documents in paper and on CD provided the appropriate electronic signature is provided.

Participation in international or regional activities and projects related to patent information

Nothing further to report.

Assistance to developing countries

The Intellectual Property Office continues to have a programme of cooperation with various countries, including a number of developing countries. In 2012 and 2013, the Search and Advisory Service carried out respectively 17 and 27 free patent searches for WIPO under the programme of Patent Information Services for Developing Countries. However, for unknown reasons, no such requests for patent searches were made in 2014.

Other activities

Nothing further to report.

VII. OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Nothing to 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.