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CONVERSION OF INDEXING SCHEMES TO CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES

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1. At its sixth session, held in October-November 2001, the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group approved the Guidelines for the Conversion of Existing IPC Indexing Schemes into Classification Schemes, which are reproduced in the Annex to this document.
2. Furthermore, the ad hoc IPC Reform Working Group agreed to request the IPC Revision Working Group to carry out pilot projects for converting a number of indexing schemes to classification schemes, using the approved Guidelines (see document IPC/REF/6/2, paragraphs 32 to 35).

[Annex follows]

ANNEX

GUIDELINES FOR THE CONVERSION OF EXISTING
IPC INDEXING SCHEMES INTO CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES

1. The decision on whether to abolish or how to convert an existing indexing scheme can only be made on a case-by-case basis after taking into account all of the following considerations.
2. Abolishment of indexing schemes should routinely be considered when one or more of the following conditions are met:
 - (a) Low number of documents indexed.
 - (b) Little search activity in the technical field.
 - (c) No evidence (e.g. significant utilization in national classification systems) for potential use or higher activity.
3. Low-use indexing schemes existing in the IPC should periodically be considered for deletion. However, if the entries of these schemes cover aspects of subject matter which represent useful search information they should be retained or, when appropriate, converted to or transferred to a classification scheme (see *Guidelines for Creation of Indexing Schemes* (GCIS), approved in document IPC/REF/5/3, Annex V for criteria).
4. If the subject matter covered by an indexing scheme being reviewed is appropriate only for indexing (see GCIS) and reasonable search activity exists, the indexing scheme should not be abolished since it permits the identification of useful search information. This is the case when the type of subject matter represented by the indexing codes is important to reduce the number of potentially relevant documents during a search, which reduction or a similar reduction can not be obtained by using the existing classification entries only or other search tools available to the users of the IPC, e.g., term searching.
5. If the indexing scheme covers subject matter already covered by other places in the IPC (e.g., in another subclass), it must be decided if these classification entries can be used (as *additional information classification*) to replace the indexing scheme. If this is the case, it is mandatory to create an informative note in the subclass of the (to be deleted) indexing scheme, drawing the attention of classifiers and searchers to the group(s) in the other place(s) and explaining the suggested conditions of use.
6. If a portion of an indexing scheme provides for inventive or novel subject matter that is essential to the determination of the patentability of the patent documents populating it, and this subject matter is not already elsewhere provided for in the titles and definitions of the classification schemes, this type of indexing should be converted to a classification scheme, if appropriate.

7. Nevertheless, such conversions are not desirable, if converting the indexing schemes to classification schemes would disrupt the classification scheme's current assignment practice. This would occur whenever the introduction of new classifications would require a significant reassignment of patent documents in the classification scheme's back file or massive alteration of the scheme's general arrangement. In these situations, it is preferable to merely note the desirability of future conversion in a note associated with the indexing scheme, but postpone the conversion until significant reorganization of the impacted classification scheme is necessary for other reasons.

8. If conversion to classification is desirable and proper in view of the GCIS and the above statements, the most appropriate place in the IPC for the replacement classification entries has to be determined. The classifier should consider which of the following actions is required:

(a) Creation of subgroups under an existing main group.

(b) Creation of a new main group within the subclass, however, the existing structure of this subclass has to be studied to find the most appropriate place for the new classification main group.

(c) Creation of a new subclass or class in exceptional cases (e.g., X-type classification situations).

9. Once the preferred place in the IPC for the subject matter formerly covered by the indexing scheme is found, a number of secondary considerations need to be made:

(a) Adaptation of the wordings of its indexing entries to the wording of the classification place where the new groups will go.

(b) Reviewing the new groups for potential overlap problems within the subclass or with other places in IPC (e.g. C 08 G 101:00 and C 08 J 9/00). If overlap is found, introduction of necessary references into appropriate places is required.

(c) Adaptation of the subclass index, notes, references, and definitions wherever necessary.

10. At least in the case of an elaborate indexing scheme, the existence of a core and an advanced level in the reformed IPC has to be taken into account. A converted low-use indexing scheme will normally not qualify for the core level due to the low number of documents classified/indexed. However when parts of an indexing scheme are converted to main groups or even subclasses, these have to become part of the core level.

[End of Annex and of document]