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المنظمة العالمية للملكية الفكرية

**ВСЕМИРНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ  
ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНОЙ СОБСТВЕННОСТИ**

C. IPC 172  
01

December 22, 2006

Re: Order of Presentation of Classification Symbols

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Madam,  
Sir,

At its thirty-eighth session, held in October 2006, the Committee of Experts of the International Patent Classification (IPC) Union agreed to conduct a survey of the practices of intellectual property offices regarding the use of a main classification and the order of presentation of classification symbols on patent documents, in search reports, and when displaying bibliographic data recorded in databases (see paragraphs 41 and 42 of document IPC/CE/38/10). The International Bureau was requested to prepare a summary of the replies for discussion at the thirty-ninth session of the Committee.

You are kindly invited to complete the attached questionnaire relating to the order of presentation of classification symbols. It would be appreciated if the questionnaire could be returned to the International Bureau by February 1, 2007. The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at the address <http://www.wipo.int/classifications> under the headings IPC/Circulars and should, preferably, be submitted to project CE 383 on the IPC e-forum (<http://www.wipo.int/ipc-ief/>), or sent to the e-mail address [ipc.mail@wipo.int](mailto:ipc.mail@wipo.int). If your Office has not yet obtained the log-in information necessary for accessing the e-forum, you may request this information by sending an email to [ipc.mail@wipo.int](mailto:ipc.mail@wipo.int).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Francis Gurry', is written over a light-colored background.

Francis Gurry  
Deputy Director General

Enclosure: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE RELATING TO THE ORDER OF PRESENTATION OF  
CLASSIFICATION SYMBOLS

To be returned to: World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)  
34, chemin des Colombettes  
1211 Geneva 20  
Switzerland  
  
ipc.mail@wipo.int

Reply submitted by: .....

Introduction

Classification information in the form of IPC symbols related to a patent document is presented in at least three different contexts:

- on the front page of a particular patent document;
- in presentations of the results of searches in databases; and
- in search reports, and further related PCT forms.

The order of IPC symbols on patent documents is described by paragraph 156 of the Guide to the eighth edition of the IPC:

“XII. PRESENTATION OF CLASSIFICATION SYMBOLS AND INDEXING CODES ON PATENT DOCUMENTS

156. The order of classification symbols and indexing codes is as follows:

1. Classification symbols representing invention information, of which that symbol which most adequately represents the invention should be listed first.
2. Classification symbols representing additional information.
3. Indexing codes.”

WIPO Standard ST.10/C does not explicitly refer to the order of symbols; only the examples provided therein allow one to draw some conclusions regarding the order of symbols.

Furthermore, for secondary classification symbols of subclasses A01P, A61P and C12S respective notes in those subclasses prescribe that “the classification symbols of this subclass are not listed first when assigned to patent documents”.

The above rules allow for some degree of flexibility and thereby for different practices of patent offices:

(i) use of a main classification: it could be considered as non-mandatory to indicate a classification that most adequately characterises the invention (or the subject matter of the first claim of a granted patent); i.e., the symbol presented first is not necessarily the symbol which most adequately represents the invention: it could simply be the symbol that comes first according to alphabetical and numerical ordering.

(ii) within each of the three categories (i.e., classification symbols representing inventive and additional information, indexing codes): If there are several symbols describing invention information, or several symbols describing additional information, the order of these symbols can be chosen by the offices.

Classification information is also part of the bibliographic data contained in databases and is normally displayed together with the other bibliographic data. However, there are no explicit rules for the presentation of classification information in this context. Paragraph 156 of the Guide and WIPO Standard ST.10/C relate only to front pages of patent documents. WIPO Standard ST.8, which refers to recording of classification information in machine-readable form, allows for the use of the attribute “F” in field 29 of the ST.8 record to identify a symbol as the symbol to be presented first

The presentation of classification information on search reports has been discussed by the twelfth session of the International Authorities (see report PCT/MIA/12/10 and document PCT/MIA/12/5). It was recommended to the Authorities to follow the requirements of WIPO Standard ST.10/C.

### Use of a Main Classification

1. If your Office allocates several IPC symbols to a particular patent document, does your Office select a “most adequate” symbol for listing first on the front page of the published patent document?

Yes

No

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2. If your answer to question 1 is “No”, does your office apply an alphanumerical ordering of the symbols relating to invention information, of the symbols relating to additional information, and of the indexing symbols (i.e., within each of these three categories)?

Yes

No

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3. If your answer to question 1 is “Yes”, is this first classification symbol used internally for any further purposes, e.g., for determining the examiner or unit in charge?

Yes

No

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4. If your answer to question 3 is “Yes”, please indicate these internal purposes:

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5. If your answer to question 1 is “Yes”, does the order of the subsequent symbols have any significance other than the order explained in paragraph 156 of the Guide and in the notes of secondary classification schemes (e.g., the order of several symbols relating to invention information)?

Yes

No

6. If your answer to question 5 is “Yes”, please explain your ordering of the symbols:

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Classifications of Subsequent Publications

7. Can the classification of the subsequent publication of a granted patent be different from the classification of the initial publication of the patent application?

Yes

No

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Classifications Given in International Search Reports of the PCT (to be Answered by International Searching Authorities only)

8. Does the symbol which is listed first in search reports have particular significance in that it most adequately characterizes the invention?

Yes

No

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Presentation of Database Search Results

9. If your office provides Internet facilities for searching or browsing of patent documents, does the presentation of classification symbols follow the rules of paragraph 156 of the Guide?

(a) for national documents?

Yes

No

(b) for foreign documents?

Yes

No

10. If your Office provides such facilities for your national documents, is the order of presentation of classification symbols there compliant with the order of the classification symbols on the front page of the respective published national patent document?

Yes

No

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11. If your answer to question 10 is “No”, please explain the difference:

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12. If your office maintains electronic databases for storing IPC classification symbols for national patent documents, does the database include provision to store information necessary for displaying the symbols in an order consistent with paragraph 156 of the Guide?

Yes

No

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Use of Attributes “F”, “L”

13. If your office applies WIPO Standard ST.8, does your office use the attributes “F” or “L” in position 29 of records according to WIPO Standard ST.8 (i.e., this field is not left empty)?

Yes

No

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Miscellaneous

14. Does your office encourage the use of “additional” IPC classification symbols when classifying documents?

Yes

No

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15. Many PCT applications claim the priority of previously filed national applications. If WIPO has to publish an application without the International Search Report, missing classification information for this publication could be substituted by classification information of corresponding priority documents. In order to enable WIPO to investigate this opportunity further, please indicate at what time, after the filing of an application, the classification of this application is first available?

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17. Please provide any further relevant information or comments:

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[End of Annex and of Circular]