

Intellectual Property Rights Information Serving Innovation

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Even if the amount of online IP information is exploding, IP awareness has not increased proportionally. This article explores some phenomena and current trends in this area.

Drowning in Information

Searching the definition of a patent in Google by entering the string "a patent is"² yields thousands of results. This is a quick demonstration of the huge amount of IPR related information on the Internet. Two decades ago, cumbersome operations involving specialists were necessary to obtain such answers. Today, almost everybody first turns to the Internet to access this type of information.

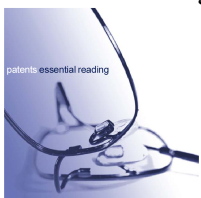
However, IPR information accessibility and quantity does not necessarily conduce to more awareness and knowledge. As it is often cliché-like said "we drown in information while thirsting for problem-solving knowledge". This is also valid for IPR information. Very basic questions are quickly answered using the Internet. But when it comes to more specific questions like: what is the best IPR strategy for my company? online literature is usually not adequate or very difficult to retrieve. Even if the amount of IPR information available online is doubling every 2 to 5 years according to statistics, this does not automatically result in more knowledge.

This article tackles some relevant trends regarding IPR information.

New Trends In IP Awareness

More clarity: some persons still think intellectual property relates to "posh houses"!

Working in the IPR field often brings you to a level of understanding preventing you from clearly expressing legal concepts. When working on a new set of brochures, the UK Patent Office commissioned a report into the attitude of the general public to intellectual property. One interviewed person thought that intellectual property related to "posh houses"! This perfectly illustrates the preconceptions we may have about the understanding of legal terms. Awareness efforts must take into account the eventual perception of messages and words used. The set of brochures the UK Patent Office has eventually developed put a special emphasis on clarity and were even recognised by a 'Crystal Mark' award from the Plain English Campaign³. **Fig. 1**



"Patents essential reading" a crystal clear publication of the UK Patent Office

¹ This article represents the views of the author, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Patent Office. The author can be reached at pschwander@epo.org

² <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=%22a+patent+is%22>

³ <http://www.patent.gov.uk/media/pressrelease/2004/1301.htm>

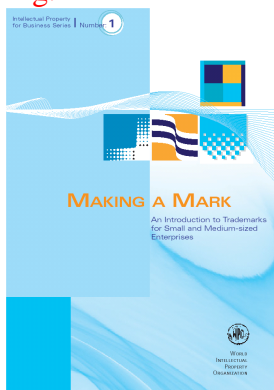
As specialists, it is essential to involve laymen when drafting IP awareness content. Even if the lack of IP awareness cannot be explained exclusively by a lack of clarity, serious efforts are needed to reach a better understanding of the IP field by explaining the legalese in plain language. Today, this communication aspect is becoming a political issue, as IPR developments are more and more influenced by the general public perception of the field.

Developing Open Content: Offering Content for Free Further Uses

Another interesting trend in IPR information is the creation of awareness material open to free further uses. Following this principle, the WIPO SME Division has developed a whole range of guides and manuals aimed at SMEs. These publications are disseminated directly by WIPO but are also offered for further dissemination and adaptation to other organisations and patent offices.

This initiative is particularly relevant as it fights duplication of content. Organisations involved in IPR awareness are often re-developing their own content. In some cases this can be justified (when the users have very specific needs), but usually duplication is unnecessary. Adapting existing content or linking to the most relevant content available on the Internet remains the best option. This will leave these organisations with creating truly innovative awareness material.

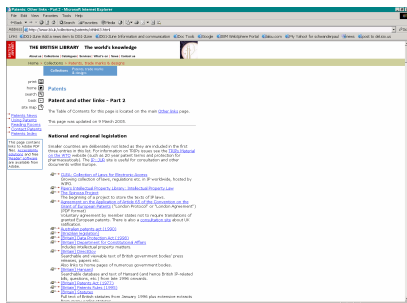
Fig. 2



"Making a Mark": at publication of the SME Division of WIPO open to adaptations

When initiating IP awareness campaigns, one can only recommend comprehensive inventory work prior to any development. The links provided at the end of this article can help you for this.

Fig. 3



Before developing your awareness material, do some inventory work to check what has been done by others using Internet IPR resources like this list of links maintained by the British Library

Blogs and News Feeds: Keeping Posted About the Latest IP Developments

If the Internet has not always kept its early promises, today, the tool is growing along its main strength: publishing and sharing content very simply and worldwide. Following this line, blogging has exploded the last two years.

A weblog, or simply a blog, appears on the Internet as a site containing periodic personal posts. These posts are listed chronologically. These blogs range from individual diaries to expression of political campaigns or topical information. Some of them are authored by a community of writers. Often, blogs give the possibility to comment posts creating online dialogs. Today, it is estimated that there are more than 25 million different Blogs on the Internet, an amount doubling every 5 months.

As you can imagine, IPR related Blogs have also flourished. These Blogs are often run by Attorneys or IP activists. They provide a very rich source of information and opinions on the latest IPR developments and sometimes tackle very general IPR issues.

In addition to their normal Internet format, these Blogs almost always offer their content in a universal news format called RSS (Rich Site Summary), a variant of the Internet lingua franca XML. This format has become an widely accepted standard for all news published on Internet or Intranets. Using a software called aggregator, these RSSized news originating from several sources can be read and displayed on a single Web page. In other words, you can subscribe to all news sources published under this format using an aggregator. When you open the aggregator, all unread news of your subscriptions are displayed. This saves users from having to repeatedly visit favourite websites to check for new content or be notified of updates via email.

Fig. 4, Fig. 5



Those are mysterious buttons for most of Internet users. They give you access to the sites and URLs you must use when you want to subscribe to a news feed.



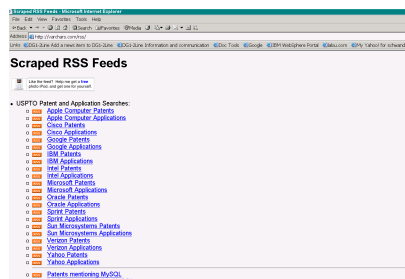
The IPR-Helpdesk news feed: contributors include WIPO and the EPO

This news feed format has not only being adopted by Blogs, but also by official and commercial news providers. The EPO, WIPO and the IPR-Helpdesk are such feeds providers. Details and examples of feeds and how to use them are provided at the end of this article.

This universal format also enables Website owners to include these feeds on their site with their own look and feel. This content integrated in a site is automatically updated by the feed provider and adds a dynamic part on the website.

Because of the universality of this format, some patent watch services have adopted it. It is possible to subscribe to a patent feed using the same news aggregating tools. These systems exist for instance to follow up the latest US patents published by a specific assignee.

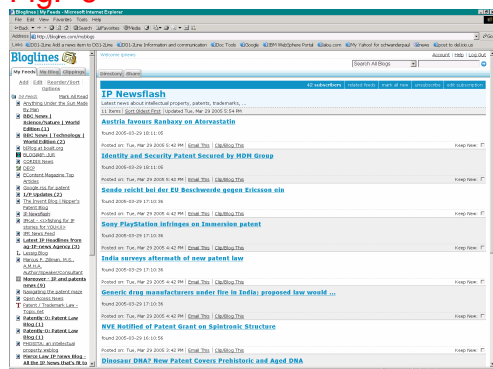
Fig. 7



Technology and company patent watch using the News feed standard RSS

For persons interested in following up IP developments and news, it is a must to subscribe to such news services and Blogs postings. This operation requires some software installation or online registration. Be sure that this small effort will pay off immediately. But beware, if you do not want to drown into too much news, you need to select carefully the best sources. Some suggestions are given in the links below.

Fig. 6



Bloglines: a free online aggregator available under bloglines.com

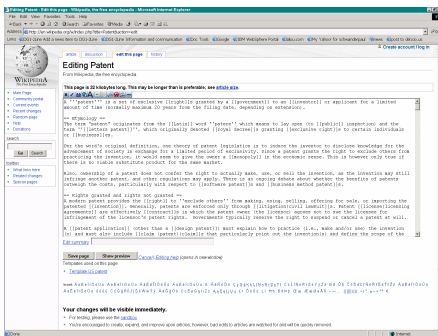
WIKIs: Sharing and Improving Information Collectively

If you do not know what "WIKI"⁴ is, you are missing one of the major Internet developments. In the coming years, this term will certainly become as popular as "Google".

A WIKI is a form of web-based collaboration tool enabling Web content to be managed, modified and extended by everyone. This extremely open concept usually sounds frightening for many content producers and managers. But WIKI provides a very efficient tracking system of all changes. WIKI like one author has put it should be thought as *"an open space like a home that leaves its front door unlocked, but doesn't get robbed because the neighbours are all out on their front steps gossiping, keeping a friendly eye on the street, and never missing a thing."* This concept has proven to be very effective by the collective creation and maintenance of the biggest online

⁴ Wiki stands for quick in Hawaiian

encyclopaedia: WIKIPEDIA⁵. Its English version contains today more than 940 000 articles. Among these articles, there are many IPR related items. Readers of this article can consider improving these articles if they want. **Fig. 8**



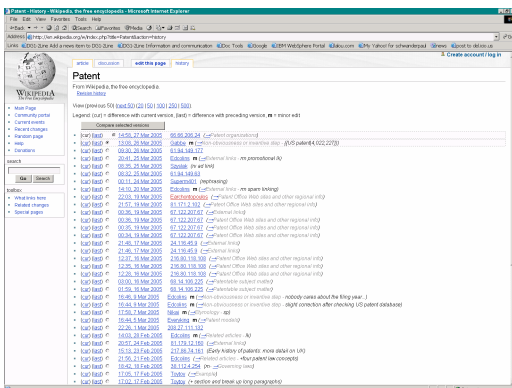
The editing screen of the article dedicated to patent on WIKIPEDIA

Based on similar WIKI applications, collective content is developed on the Internet for specific fields or on corporate Intranets. It must be noted that WIKIs do not necessarily mean editing privileges for everybody. They can also be based on authorised editors. The simplicity of editing and all tracking possibilities are the biggest strengths of such tools. In the context of IPR information, such collaborative tools could be used to develop collectively the best IPR awareness material. Following a similar principle, thematic WIKIs are being developed. WIKITRAVEL⁶ is one example: a travel guide open for editing to all Internet users.

This collaborative avenue is most promising prospect for all online awareness tools. One can bet that collaborative online efforts will offer more problem-solving information thanks to specialists sharing and improving their knowledge openly. It can be noted that the potential of WIKIs has recently been acknowledged by Google which proposed to voluntarily host WIKIPEDIA content.

Fig. 9

The history of the Patent article on WIKIPEDIA, about 50 changes have occurred in the last 2 months.



Room for Better IPR Information

In recent years, IPR awareness has increased. Internet has played its role by improving the speed at which you can access relevant information. But an organisation entering the IPR field will not find answers to all their questions on the Internet. There is still room for improvement in delivering more focused and sector oriented IPR information. Following questions for instance are still difficult to answer using the Internet: What are the global patenting costs? I am an enterprise in the

⁵ www.wikipedia.org

⁶ http://wikitravel.org/en/Main_Page

financial sector, what shall I know about patent protection? Step by step, who can best assist me in a patent process? Patent drafting elements - even if it is more than recommended to use the services of an attorney, this information can be useful for researchers. This type of focused content needs to be developed in close contacts with users and all IPR stakeholders keeping in mind that Internet will eventually not replace specialised advises but should trigger them. And as has been explained above, new technologies offer many unexplored possibilities to develop cleverly this content.

Recommended Reading and List of Links

IP Awareness Publications

"Crystal Clear" publications of the UK Patent Office

[Patent Basic Facts](#)

[Patent Essential Reading](#)

[Patent Application Guide](#)

WIPO SMEs Publications

http://www.wipo.int/sme/en/documents/guides_manuals.htm

Places Where IPR Awareness Material is Almost Comprehensively Referenced

EPO Links collection

<http://www.european-patent-office.org/onlinelinks/>

British Library Patent Links, *Part 1, Part 2*

<http://www.bl.uk/collections/patents/othlink2.html>

<http://www.bl.uk/collections/patents/othlink3.html>

IP-Mall links

http://ipmall.info/ip_links/fplchome.asp

Example of useful IPR content scarcely available on the Internet: a tutorial from the Canadian Intellectual Property Office on how to write a patent.

http://strategis.gc.ca/sc_mrksv/cipo/patents/e-filing/menu.htm

IP Newsfeeds and Blogs

Some IP Blogs

A European Patent Attorney's Blog on Intellectual Property Law

<http://www.ipjur.com/03.php3>

Patently-O: Patent Law Blog, from a US patent attorney

<http://patentlaw.typepad.com/patent/>

Some IP Newsfeeds

IPR News for the IPR-Helpdesk: EPO and WIPO are active contributors to this feed.

<http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org/rss?ver=10&len=en>

European Patent Office feed

http://www.european-patent-office.org/_data/update/rss.xml

WIPO feeds

<http://www.wipo.int/news/en/newsfeed.jsp>

IP Newsflash

<http://www.ipnewsflash.com/>

Moreover IP and Patent news, to be found under Business

http://w.moreover.com/site/products/ind/rss_feeds.html

A compilation of feeds and Blogs dedicated to IPR and technology news

<http://www.bloglines.com/blog/ipnews>

Examples of a patent alert service offering newsfeeds

<http://www.freepatentsonline.com/rssfeed.html>

<http://cxp.paterra.com/RSSNewsFeeds.htm>

IP News Feeds: Tools to Read Them

One of the best options to read news feed is to use an online aggregator. *Bloglines* is one of them. This tool is free and you do not need to install it on your computer. It just requires a simple online registration. Afterwards, you can consult your feeds from everywhere by connecting to the Internet. A tutorial explaining how to use this tool is available *here*.

<http://bloglines.com/>

<http://lawlibtech.com/archives/000324.html>

Please note that feeds subscription lists can be exported and re-used via a format called OPML (Outline Processor Markup Language). Bloglines also provides you with additional suggestions based on your subscriptions. It is advised to select carefully your feeds considering your information needs.

WIKIs

An introduction to WIKI

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

To give you an example, the Wikipedia *Patent article* that can be improved by anybody editing *this page*. The *Patent page editing history* gives a good idea of the amount of collective efforts going into the maintenance and the improvement of this article.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Patent&action=edit>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Patent&action=history>