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Conference report

IPI-Confex conference and exposition, Seville, Spain, March 2008

The, now regular, annual IPI-Confex was held this year in Seville, Spain from 2 to 5 March. Over 300 delegates came to the conference and enjoyed many fine presentations and much fine weather although sunshine throughout the conference did not appear to persuade too many delegates to skip the conference for additional sightseeing. The pre-conference Sunday session kicked off with vendor workshops and in the evening a welcome reception to honour the speakers, chairs and the IPI Board of Counselors, which organises the programme.

The conference proper started with a presentation by Andrew Berridge from Pfizer who spoke about enterprise Web 2.0, which is the use of Web 2.0 in companies, and he described the use of a Wikipedia-type system within the organisation to assist in knowledge sharing. This topic is interesting in showing the use of social networking services within a business but it was somewhat adrift from the core of this conference, international patent information. Yulia Aspinall Head of Library and Information Services at MedImmune also left us waiting for the main theme of the conference when she spoke on the topic of knowledge management and competitive intelligence. She noted that the key to this is connecting people, technology and information and that we are all already in fact using some of these techniques.

Third off was David Brown, Executive Vice President, corporate markets, Thomson Scientific who set out the changing environment for business. He noted the shortening research and development cycle time and the growing importance and value of intellectual property, both patents and trade marks. China and Korea were showing the greatest increase in patent activity. Non-patent literature references in patent applications were increasing rapidly across most technologies.

Gerhard Fischer from Syngenta was first with a core presentation describing a systematic approach to freedom to operate searches (FTO). He gave as an example the genetically engineered product Golden Rice™ for which there were 70 patents applied for by 31 companies or institutes. The key question to be answered in an FTO search was: is there any dependency on third party patents? For FTO, full text searching can find missing items but he also noted that the basic patent may have a narrower scope than later family members. For the final steps in the search, he proposed a citation analysis and an update.

Two presentations covered the effect of the important patent case in the United States, *KSR v Teleflex*. Yateen Pargaonkar described this recent case at the Supreme Court which relaxed the previous rigid application of the long-standing determination of presumption of validity using the test of teaching, suggestion and motivation (TSM). Later Ron Kaminecki from Thomson described the faults that the Supreme Court found in TSM regarding the focus

on the problem and the “person of ordinary skill”. He felt searchers in future would need to check “commercial success” of inventions and to determine “long felt but unresolved needs” and this would necessitate a look at trade literature, open press, manufacturers newsletters, government hearings and so on. To determine the “failure of others” searchers would need to search for consumer reports, recalls, epidemiology studies, statistical information and so on. The case would mean an increasing work load for searchers.

Marc Adler of the Rohm and Haas Company summarised the state of play with the reform legislation progressing through the United States legislature which aimed to improve patent quality and reduce patent litigation cost and risks. It is not prudent to report now all he said in this fast changing area but it is important to report that he noted that quality starts with a quality search. He thought here should be incentives for pre-search before patent application. The Intellectual Property Owners Association (IPO) had formed a Patent Quality Task Force to look into both what were the indicia of quality and also how to measure it. Among the suggested positive indicators were

- Is the prior art from other patent offices cited?
- Are the PCT search report and references cited?
- Are related applications cited?
- Was non-patent prior art cited?
- Was a search conducted by a foreign patent office that gave the examination an additional perspective?

For the first time, a series of eight breakout sessions were organised for IPI-Confex. The topics were varied as was their popularity, which was reflected in the attendance at the different groups. Generally these sessions, which reported back later to the plenary conference, were felt to be successful.

An interesting presentation was given by Gerard van der Ligt from Philips on patent landscaping and valuation which set out the steps for successfully using this technique. The first step was the definition of the real problem and second, naturally, was search and downloading with analysis and categorisation. The third step was the statistical valuation to generate a score for a patent family which was then translated into a financial value. Finally, the results could be exported to an Excel database.

Christiane Emmerich from FIZ gave a case study of a freedom to operate search for the anti-ulcer drug Pantoprazole which was a well-balanced approach to the strengths and weaknesses of abstract and full-text databases. She concluded by saying how it was essential to use value added databases as well as accessing the first level text databases from the patent offices.

The conclusion of David Walsh's presentation on the "Integration of chemical structures from pharmaceutical discovery – a Pfizer perspective" was that database vendors needed to adopt standards. He pointed out the lack of standardisation of patent numbers, disease target names and so on as well as poor use of IUPAC nomenclature, etc. Standardisation was needed so that imported data could be integrated with internal databases.

Suzanne Tropic's topic was bio-sequences searching which neatly picked out strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the available databases. She illustrated the difference in timeliness and comprehensiveness in databases for PCTGEN, USGENE, Fast-Alert, REGISTRY and DGENE. She pointed out the limitations in the search algorithms for identifying identical and similar sequences.

John Barnard from Digital Chemistry Limited described the recent work on extending in-house Oracle databases of individual molecules for substructure and similarity searching to handle Markush representations. Some 'cartridges' are available for this task.

Peter Atzmueller of Voestalpine showed his company's approach to adding further data to traditional classic metadata downloaded from public patent databases to provide a more comprehensive result. Patent landscapes were created to provide a structured overview of large numbers of documents and, most interestingly, user feedback (a traffic light system) was added to the database to increase workflow productivity.

Torsten Gerber from Robert Bosch reported on the effect of the introduction of IPC8 on the work of his organisation. The new core and advanced versions of IPC8 created few problems but the real impact of its introduction was the final end to paper-based searching and also the increased effort required on a continuous basis to review changes in classification.

Maik Annies from Syngenta spoke on the important topic of searching for non-patent literature. In contrast to patent literature, non-patent information and internet content are scattered across many different resources. Only a few commercial suppliers provide good content or advanced search and display capabilities. His presentation introduced strategies for effectively using the publisher e-journal sites and internet content.

Several presentations gave different views on providing alerting services. Gerard Ypma of ASML described his company's closed loop alerting system introduced in 2001 based on Thomson DWPI abstracts and using the iEPROS platform; Inga George of Aarhus-Karlshamm described a new low-cost system using the Rapid service from CentreDoc; while Hubert Kiehl from the SEB Group described the his company's new patent watch workflow system using Questel technology. In his second presentation at the conference, Andrew Berridge described his company's automated literature alerts using the DataStarWeb Application Programming Interface (API) to execute saved searches. Results are retrieved in

XML format and turned into Word documents and EndNote Libraries. The time taken for an information scientist to prepare their alerts has been significantly reduced compared to the previous manual method.

As in previous years Stephen Adams of Magister gave an IPI MasterClass™ – this time on citations. He started with some history of citations starting with common law decisions in the 19th century. From the 1950s the concept of backward citations was adopted into bibliometric studies. The ISI patent citation index started in 1964 and since the advent of the hyperlink and other algorithms patent citation studies have become essential for automated mapping tools and in measures of innovation and patent value. He noted the challenges for patents citation, such as the existence of families and concluded that action by patent offices was required to get better control of citations. This was a useful and very well received presentation.

Irene Schellner of the European Patent Office updated the audience on patent information from China, Japan and Korea. Her presentation highlighted what an excellent service the European Patent Office provides in assisting users in the West with East Asian patent information.

We were also updated by Antonios Farrassopoulos of the World Intellectual Property Organisation on the latest developments with the International Patent Classification and the forthcoming new edition. William Meredith, also from WIPO, provided an overview of PatentScope which provides access to PCT and other data. He noted that full text, based on OCR capture, was able to be searched and that much legal status information was available.

During the conference, a small but focussed exhibition was held within the conference venue at the Barceló Renacimiento Hotel. The exhibition provided a good opportunity for delegates to discuss services with representatives of the vendors. There were also vendor presentations before the start of the conference proper (as mentioned earlier) and also some during the main sessions, though these were generally mercifully short.

During the conference dinner the winner of the 2008 IPI Award was announced as Nancy Lambert, who is, inter alia, a long-standing member of the World Patent Information Editorial Advisory Board. At the time of the closing of the conference there was no confirmed venue for 2009 but suffice to say there will be a demand for a similar event next year.

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