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**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**  
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**SPECIAL UNION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT CLASSIFICATION  
(IPC UNION)**

**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS**

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**Geneva, March 16 to 20, 1998**

**SURVEY ON THE USE OF THE IPC**

*Document prepared by the International Bureau*

1. In order to update the data concerning the use of the IPC by industrial property offices, which data appear in Chapter 5.1.6 of the *WIPO Handbook on Industrial Property Information and Documentation*, the International Bureau sent to all members and observers of the PCIPI the Circular No. PCIPI 2179 of October 17, 1996, containing a questionnaire relating to the use of the IPC.

2. Replies were received from the following 44 offices (in the order of two-letter codes thereof): Armenia (AM), Argentina (AR), Austria (AT), Canada (CA), Switzerland (CH), China (CN), Cuba (CU), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Denmark (DK), Eurasian Patent Office (EA), Estonia (EE), European Patent Office (EP), Spain (ES), France (FR), United Kingdom (GB), Georgia (GE), Greece (GR), Ireland (IE), India (IN), Japan (JP), Kyrgyzstan (KG), Kazakhstan (KZ), Liechtenstein (LI), Sri Lanka (LK), Lithuania (LT), Monaco (MC), Republic of Moldova (MD), The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (MK), Malaysia (MY), Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), New Zealand (NZ), Portugal (PT), Russian Federation (RU), Sweden (SE), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Tajikistan (TJ), Turkey (TR), United States of America (US), Uzbekistan (UZ), Yugoslavia (YU), South Africa (ZA).

3. Almost all the offices which participated in the survey assign classification symbols down to group level. A clear majority assign also non-obligatory classification symbols or indexing codes. A substantial majority of the offices keep at least part of their manual search file according to the IPC. Offices established during the last ten years use the IPC for their manual file or do not keep any manual file at all. In the latter case searches are carried out using exclusively computerized databases. Queries in computerized databases have become very popular among all offices. IPC symbols are mostly used, particularly in combination with keywords. ECLA (which is based on the IPC) is the most widely used classification for queries after the IPC, due to the availability of EPO databases among European offices. The US Classification is used by a number of offices in queries concerning US documents. The Annex to this document contains statistical data prepared by the International Bureau on the basis of the replies received in the survey.

*4. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the survey on the use of the IPC.*

[Annex follows]

ANNEX

STATISTICAL DATA PREPARED ON THE BASIS OF THE REPLIES  
RECEIVED IN THE SURVEY ON THE USE OF THE IPC

INTRODUCTION

Forty-four offices have replied to the WIPO Circular No. PCIPI 2179 relating to the use of the IPC. One office, namely Liechtenstein (LI), does not use the IPC for any purpose. The replies of the other 43 offices are compiled below.

PART A – ASSIGNING OF IPC SYMBOLS TO PATENT DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED  
BY YOUR OFFICE

1. As of what date did your Office begin assigning IPC symbols to its patent documents?\*
2. Did your Office at first, or does your Office now, assign the IPC symbols only down to subclass level?\*
3. If your Office assigned at first the IPC symbols only down to subclass level, when did your Office begin assigning the IPC symbols down to group level? \*
4. Does your Office assign any of the following non-obligatory IPC symbols after the double oblique stroke?
  - non-obligatory classification symbols:  
  
YES: AR, AT, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EA, EP, ES, FR, GB, GR, IE, IN, JP, KG, MD, NL, NO, NZ, PT, RU, SE, SI, SK (25 offices)  
  
NO: AM, CA, CN, CU, EE, GE, LK, LT, MC, MK, MY, TJ, TR, US, YU, ZA (16 offices)  
  
No reply: KZ, UZ (two offices)

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\* The replies to the items marked by an asterisk will be used for updating the data in the *WIPO Handbook on Industrial Property Information and Documentation*.

– indexing codes:

YES: AR, AT, CH, CN, CZ, DE, DK, EA, EP, ES, FR, GB, GR, IE, JP, KZ,  
MD, NO, NZ, PT, RU, SE, SK (23 offices)

NO: AM, CA, CU, EE, GE, IN, KG, LK, LT, MC, MK, MY, NL, SI, TJ, TR,  
US, YU, ZA (19 offices)

No reply: UZ (one office)

## PART B – USE OF THE IPC FOR MANUAL SEARCHING

1. Does your Office use any manual search file for searching?

NO: GR, LK, LT, MC, MK, PT, SI, TR (eight offices)

2. Is your Office's manual search file, or part thereof, arranged according to the IPC?

YES: AM, AR, AT, CA, CH, CN, CZ, CU, DE, DK, EA, EE, EP, ES, FR, GE, IE, IN,  
KG, MD, MY, NL, NO, NZ, RU, SE, SK, TJ, US, UZ, YU (31 offices)

NO: GB, JP (two offices)

No reply: KZ, ZA (two offices)

3. If the answer to the preceding question is "Yes," indicate which countries or organizations have issued patent documents arranged according to the IPC (indicate within brackets the years of publication of those documents).\*

4. Is your Office's manual search file, or part thereof, arranged according to another patent classification, e.g., ECLA, UK Classification, US Classification?

YES: AT, CA, DE, DK, EA, EE, EP, GB, IN, JP, NL, NO, SE, US, YU (15 offices)

NO: AM, AR, CH, CN, CU, CZ, ES, FR, GE, IE, IN, KG, MD, MY, NZ, RU, SK,  
TJ, UZ, ZA (20 offices)

No reply: KZ (one office)

5. If the answer to the preceding question is “Yes,” indicate for each Classification used which countries or organizations have issued patent documents arranged according to that Classification (indicate within brackets the years of publication of those documents).

The following classifications are used by more than one office for arranging at least part of the manual search file:

DE: DE, DK, EE, NO, YU  
ECLA: EP, GB, NL, SE  
IdT(NL): DK, NL, NO  
UK: EA, GB  
US: CA, DK, EA, NO, SE, US

The following offices keep part of their national documents according to their national classification:

AT, CA, IN

#### PART C – USE OF THE IPC FOR COMPUTERIZED SEARCHING

1. Are the IPC symbols used in queries to computerized databases (percentage of searches when available)?

YES: AR (100), AT (25), CA (50), CH, CN (100), CZ (80), CU (75), DE (50), DK (50), EE (100), EP (15), ES (100), FR, GB (50), GE (70), GR (100), IN, JP (100), KG (100), KZ (100), MC (80), MD (90), MK (45), MY (60), NL (78), NZ (100), PT (100), RU (5), SE (80), SI (80), SK (50), TR (10), US (1), UZ (100), YU (3.2) (35 offices)

NO: AM, EA, LK, LT, NO, TJ (six offices)

No reply: IE, ZA (two offices)

– in combination with IPC indexing codes?

YES: AR, CZ, DE, DK, EP, ES, FR, GB, IN, JP, KZ, MD, NL, RU, SE, SK (16 offices)

– in combination with other indexing terms?

YES: AR, AT, DE, EP, GE, IN, NL, SK (eight offices)

- in combination with keywords (percentage of searches, when available)?

YES: AR (80), AT (100), CA (60), CH (70), CN (100), CU (75), CZ (70), DE (50), DK (50), EE (70), EP (100), ES (100), FR, GB (50), GR (95), IN, JP (100), KZ (20), MC (80), MD (45), MK (45), MY (40), NL (71), NZ (90), PT (90), SE (60), SK (50), TR (50) (28 offices)

2. Are symbols of another patent classification, e.g., ECLA, UK Classification, US Classification, used in queries to computerized databases?

YES: AT, CA, CH, DE, DK, EP, FR, GB, GR, IN, JP, MC, NL, PT, SE, US  
(16 offices)

NO: AM, AR, CN, CU, CZ, EE, ES, GE, KG, KZ, LT, MD, MK, MY, NO, NZ, RU, SI, SK, TJ, TR, UZ, YU, ZA (24 offices)

No reply: EA, IE, LK (three offices)

3. If the answer to the preceding question is “Yes,” indicate for each Classification used which countries or organizations have issued patent documents searched according to that Classification (indicate within brackets the years of publication of those documents).

The following Classifications are used by more than one office in queries to computerized databases:

ECLA: AT, CH, DE, DK, EP, FR, GB, GR, JP, MC, NL, PT, SE (13 offices)  
US: CA, CH, DE, EP, GB, NL, SE, US (eight offices)

The following offices use in addition the symbols of their national classification system in queries to computerized databases:

CA, GB, JP (F terms)

The EPO is using in addition symbols of the Derwent Classification.

#### PART D – GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Indicate any additional information which you think may be of interest with respect to the use of the IPC by your Office.\*
2. List any IPC-related publications that your Office has prepared for internal use or for use by the public (indicate the use).\*

[End of Annex and of document]