

# WIPO



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**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES**

### **PLENARY**

#### **Seventh Session**

**Geneva, June 10 to 14, 2002**

#### **STATUS REPORT ON THE JOPAL PROJECT**

*Document prepared by the Secretariat*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. JOPAL is a centralized database of classified bibliographic data relating to articles published in leading technical and scientific publications. It was originally initiated with the objective of providing intellectual property Offices (IPOs) with a search aid for prior art searching of Non-Patent Literature (NPL). The selection and classification of the articles for inclusion in the database is undertaken by cooperating Industrial Property Offices (currently numbering 11) with data capture and publication by WIPO. JOPAL is now provided as a free-of-charge searchable database accessible via the Internet from the WIPO Intellectual Property Digital Libraries (IPDL) website. The JOPAL database search fields include Author, Title and IPC.

2. At the sixth Plenary session of the Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT), held in January 2001, the Secretariat gave a report on a survey of JOPAL usage and presented some possible options, for an extended future JOPAL service. Following discussion of these possible options, the Committee requested that a follow-up proposal detailing costs and benefits be provided before it formed a judgement on the possible future direction of the project (see document SCIT/6/7, paragraphs 21 to 26).

3. In undertaking this further evaluation the Secretariat has recognized the need to revisit the aims of the JOPAL service and the target audience which will make use of the information provided. In addition, note has been taken of certain developments which have a bearing on the service and how it might be provided in the future. On the basis of these factors, recommendations for further action are proposed.

## FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

### Aims of the Service/Target Audience

4. Although initially a project aimed at IPOs with a view to reducing costs in search file maintenance, the JOPAL survey undertaken in 2000 indicated that in its present form, JOPAL did not provide a platform of sufficient utility to IPOs to support their NPL prior art searching. The current restriction of JOPAL to include only the classified bibliographic details of the article was considered limiting when set against the present day (commercial) availability of abstract and full-text databases. For JOPAL to provide a more effective tool for prior art it was proposed that extensions to the service were required to include the abstracts and/or the full text of articles to support searching and also (electronic) access to the full NPL article.

5. However, with the use of JOPAL being extended in recent years to include Patent Libraries (and through them researchers, etc.) and since April, 1999, by its free publication on the Internet, it has become available for access by the general public. This has resulted in a change of emphasis in the use of JOPAL from a service aimed at IPOs to assist in their prior art searching to one which assists in promoting patent awareness among the public at large.

6. On the basis of the above, a number of questions need to be addressed, namely

*If mainly now used by the public at large, should JOPAL be continued? Are there alternatives?*

7. The statistics of access to the JOPAL database on the WIPO IPDL site, which were compiled when conducting the usage survey, showed a small but regular usage of the database for which some 875 user accounts had been set up. (Note that with the change in IPDL structure only global statistics are now available). Based on this information, and given the lack of an alternative generally accessible free service, the SCIT Plenary concluded that, assuming the willingness of the cooperating offices to continue to classify journals allocated to them, JOPAL should continue to be updated and published as at present. On possible alternatives, it was noted that the European Patent Office (EPO) maintained NPL bibliographic database provided a comparable service for internal use within the EPO to that of JOPAL (see footnote <sup>1</sup>) but at that stage there were no plans to make this database freely available. The EPO has now indicated that there are plans to provide access to this database in 2002 (as part of the Esp@cenet service)

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<sup>1</sup>JOPAL

Starts in 1981; covers PCT Minimum Documentation; IPC and Bibliographic identification data  
EPOs NPL Database

Starts in 1989 with backfile extension per field; covers EPO's NPL including PCT Minimum Documentation; ECLA and  
Bibliographic identification data

and that, following interest expressed by the commercial hosts, the database will be available to them at marginal cost. It is therefore expected that the latter will develop services including this product.

8. On the basis of the current usage profile, the facilities offered by a bibliographic-based type of service would appear to be sufficient and as such it would not be cost justified to extend it. However the following questions remain:

*Would expenditure on extensions to a JOPAL based service result in a sufficient change in user market cost effectiveness to do so - i.e., is there still a need for such a service to support the search functions undertaken by IPO offices?*

and

*Should such services continue to be undertaken by WIPO and the Member States or should this be handled by the commercial sector?*

9. There is a continued and growing interest in NPL. Indeed in some technical areas where developments have a short life time due to rapid technical advancement, there is less reliance on patents, and prior art searching in technical journals is therefore at a premium. Specific and significant steps are being taken by major IPOs to improve their coverage of, and accessibility to, sources of non-patent literature. There is therefore a *prima facie* case for services providing such access.

10. In addressing this issue the proposals for future action which were included in document SCIT/6/4 made reference to possible solutions including the extension of the current IPDL service to provide access to commercial databases hosting the appropriate journal full-text articles or a state-of-the-arts system as a possible function of a Global IPDL system. However, following decisions relating to IT budget allocation in the 2002/3 biennium, and until further work relating to IPDL standards is undertaken within SCIT, further IPDL technical development work has been suspended for the duration of the current biennium. Given the strain on available IT resources, it is therefore considered that the provision of an extended NPL service should not be undertaken within WIPO but rather should be left to the commercial sector.

#### Other Factors

11. Other factors which may have a bearing on the costs of possible future services provided by the commercial sector include:

(i) recent moves by publishers of Scientific and Technical Journals, for example the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM), to make their journals more readily accessible by universities and research establishments in developing countries (cf the UN's Health InterNetwork: Access to Research Initiative (HINARI));

(ii) possible JOPAL/NPL-related requirements in the area of traditional knowledge arising from discussions to take place in the meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (second session), held in Geneva from December 10 to 14, 2001 (see document WIPO/GRTKF/IC/2/6).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 12. It is recommended to

(i) continue JOPAL as at present but monitor the moves by the EPO to make their NPL bibliographic database publicly available via the internet. When the said database is implemented, contributing offices should be consulted *vis-à-vis* the possible curtailment of JOPAL;

(ii) invite representatives of the commercial sector to make proposals with respect to a NPL service for use by IPOs, their associated libraries, universities, research establishments, etc. (with a special emphasis on the needs of developing countries (including LDCs) and countries in transition).

*13. The SCIT Plenary is invited to comment upon and approve the contents of this document.*

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