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WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
GENEVA

STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

STANDARDS AND DOCUMENTATION WORKING GROUP

Eighth Session
Geneva, March 19 to 22, 2007

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM CONTENTS FOR INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY OFFICES' WEBSITES

Document prepared by the Secretariat

1.   The Patent Documentation Group (PDG), in its letter of December 8, 2006, informed the International Bureau (IB) of the results of its 2006 Survey on Design of Industrial Property Offices'Websites. This Survey was the follow-up to the investigations regarding the implementation of the "Recommended Minimum Contents for Intellectual Property Offices' Websites" (Part 8.5 of the *WIPO Handbook on Industrial Property Information and Documentation*) that were carried out by the PDG in 2003. It was considered by the Standards and Documentation Working Group (SDWG) of the Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT) at its fourth session in January 2004. The said recommended minimum contents were adopted by the SCIT at its fourth Plenary session in December 1999. (See document SCIT/SDWG/4/7 and paragraphs 61 to 63 of SCIT/SDWG/4/14.)

2.   The letter of the PDG, which contains the above-mentioned Survey, and Part 8.5 of the WIPO Handbook are reproduced as Annexes I and II, respectively, to this document.

*3.	The SDWG is invited:*

*(a)	to note the information provided in the above-mentioned letter and Survey by the PDG, which are reproduced in Annex I to this document and, if deemed appropriate, to take a decision on what action should be taken; and*

*(b)	to consider whether it is time to establish a task for reviewing the "Recommended Minimum Contents for Intellectual Property Offices' Websites" (Part 8.5 of the WIPO Handbook on Industrial Property Information and Documentation) and, if deemed appropriate, to prepare a proposal for its revision.*

[Annexes follow]

ANNEX I

Patent Documentation Group

Mr. Francis Gurry
Deputy Director General
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
34, Chemin des Colombettes
CH 1211 Genève 20
Switzerland

December 8, 2006

**Re: PDG WG IMPACT 2006 Survey on Design of IPO Websites
      (AM-023-06)**

Dear Mr. Gurry,

On behalf of the PDG's IMPACT Working Group (Chairman Dr. Peter Kallas), I would like to inform you about the results of the above survey as the content and the design of Intellectual Property Offices' websites is a topic of permanent interest for the patent community.

In August 2003, the Patent Documentation Group (PDG) informed WIPO about the outcome of a survey in which the websites of the EPO, JPO, USPTO, WIPO and of 27 EPC member states where checked against the list of recommendations published in the "Recommended Minimum Contents for Intellectual Property Websites" (Part 8.5 of the WIPO Handbook on Industrial Property Information; see also SCIT/SDWG/4/7 for the cited letter and a copy of the recommendations).

Three years later the PDG again had a closer look at IP office's websites. This time the websites of 71 national IP offices were screened for 8 important services. Again the PDG would like to inform WIPO about the results of the second survey.

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Focus of investigation

Does the Website offer...	Relevant paragraph of the WIPO recommendations
Web pages in English?	=> Paragraph 2: "At least the homepage and the most important changes (e.g. information on how to apply for intellectual property protection) should also be kept in English."
Searchable databases? - Patents - Designs - Trademarks Legal status information? - Patents - Designs - Trademarks Downloadable patent docs?	=> Paragraph 7: "To the extent possible, Intellectual Property Office's Websites should provide searchable databases or a link to databases relating to intellectual property documents of the IPO (such as legal status information). Links to other searchable databases should be included where appropriate."

The survey covered the websites of all the national IP offices being listed in the WIPO directory of IP offices and being marked with a valid link to the WWW (71 out of 190 IP offices listed), see http://www.wipo.int/directory/en/urls.jsp

Some of the listed links in the directory were not valid. For this reason parts of the first paragraph of the WIPO recommendations may be cited here:

Paragraph 1:
"...If an IPO creates a new Website or changes the contents/layout thereof, the Office is invited to inform the International Bureau of WIPO of that fact in order for the International Bureau to establish a hyperlink to the individual URL of the IPO...."

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Summary of results
(For detailed results see "PDG_Evaluation_Table.doc")

Services on IPO website	Availability (percent of 71 investigated websites, June 2006)
Web pages in English?	(83%) contain at least one page in English
Searchable databases? - Patents - Designs - Trademarks	(51%) allow searching for national patent documents (40%) allow searching for national designs (49%) allow searching for national trademarks
Legal status information? - Patents - Designs - Trademarks	(36%) provide some legal status information for patents (31%) provide some legal status information for designs (34%) provide some legal status information for trademarks
Downloadable patent docs?	(26%) national IP Offices provide free electronic access to at least the latest issues of their patent documents

Conclusions

The evaluation was done by a group of patent information specialists, who volunteered to do this, with the goal of creating an overview of the present global situation with respect to 8 important services on IP Offices Websites. The findings do not have the weight of an academic study. The setup of the evaluation was simple and inconsistencies and minor errors may therefore exist.

Not all of the IP Offices that one would expect to have a website show up in the WIPO directory with a link to the WWW. Maybe some URLs were simply not reported to WIPO?

About 80% of the 71 evaluated websites do have at least one important page in English. This could be judged as good. IP Offices Websites are an essential information tool for patent professionals from all over the world. This should always be kept in mind by all IP Offices.

Searches for patents or trademarks can be done on about 50% of the evaluated web sites and searches for designs on 40%. Legal status information for patents, designs or trademarks is available on roughly 1/3 of the evaluated web sites. Having in mind the reserved wording of paragraph 7 which states only that such services should be available, "to the extent possible", the found percentages can be considered as pleasingly high.

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Patent documents are available for download (without any charge) on about 1/4 of the websites. Compared with the percentages of the services mentioned before, this rate is somewhat disappointing. The idea of making new inventions available to the public for encouraging technical progress is fundamental to the patent system. It is therefore astonishing that the internet is not used more often as an efficient publication platform for patents.

Despite the mentioned deficiencies the overall outcome of the evaluation is rated as very positive and promising.

It may be helpful to present the results of our evaluation to all contracting states during the next meeting of the SCIT (Standing Committee on Information Technologies) in order to show our strong interest in the content and design of IP Offices' websites and emphasise the WIPO's recommendations at the same time.
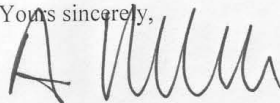
Another possibility could be to ask all national patent offices to check and update the Directory of the Intellectual Property Offices on a regular basis.

We do understand that it is a difficult task to maintain the Directory of Intellectual Property Offices up to date due to the large number of listed states. However there are some means which would certainly be of great help, e.g. a Hyperlink Checker (e.g. Web Link Validator) to identify broken links, "Web Spiders" to scan websites or a robot to automatically search and find new Intellectual Property/Patent Office's websites.

Please contact Dr. Peter Kallas at BASF (peter.kallas@basf.com), Chairman of the WG IMPACT for further information on this survey.

We look forward to continuing the close cooperation with WIPO.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Alexander Mullen
Secretary General
Patent Documentation Group

cc: WIPO Mr Angel Lopez Solanas

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
WIPO RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IP OFFICE'S WEBSITES

WIPO Recommendations:
http://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/scit/fr/scit wg 2/scit wg 2 4.pdf

IP Offices Web Sites: http://www.wipo.int/directory/en/urls.jsp

Evaluated Web Sites (71 out of 190 countries = those which are listed with a valid link to the WWW)

	Country	English Pages?	Patents Database?	Patents LegStat?	Designs Database?	Designs LegStat?	Trademarks Database?	Trademarks Legal Status?	Patent Docs? (free access)
AL	Albania	X							
DZ	Algeria	X	X				X		
AD	Andorra	X					X	X	
AR	Argentina	no							
AM	Armenia	X	X						X
AU	Australia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
AT	Austria	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
AZ	Azerbaijan	X							
BB	Barbados	X							
BY	Belarus	X							
BZ	Belize	X							
BO	Bolivia	no							
BA	Bosnia & Herzegovina	no							
BR	Brazil	no							
BG	Bulgaria	X					X	X	
CA	Canada	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CL	Chile	no							
CN	China	X	X	X	X				X
CG	Congo	X							
CR	Costa Rica	no							
HR	Croatia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CU	Cuba	no	X						X
CY	Cyprus	X							
CZ	Czech Republic	X	X	X	X		X		
DK	Denmark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
DO	Dominican Republic	no							
EG	Egypt	X	X						
SV	El Salvador	no							
EE	Estonia	X			X	X	X	X	
FI	Finland	X	X		X	X	X	X	
FR	France	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
GE	Georgia	X							
DE	Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
GR	Greece	X	X	X					

	Country	English Pages?	Patents Database?	Patents LegStat?	Designs Database?	Designs LegStat?	Trademarks Database?	Trademarks Legal Status?	Patent Docs? (free access)
HU	Hungary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
IS	Iceland	X							
IN	India	X	X						
ID	Indonesia	X	X		X		X		
IE	Ireland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
IL	Israel	X					X	X	
JM	Jamaica	X							
JP	Japan	X	X	X	X		X		X
JO	Jordan	X					X		
LA	Lao People's Democratic Republic	X							
LV	Latvia	X			X	X			
LB	Lebanon	X							
LT	Lithuania	X	X				X		
MY	Malaysia	X							
MX	Mexico	no	X		X		X		
MA	Morocco	X	X		X		X		
NP	Nepal	X							
NL	Netherlands	no	X	X			X		
NZ	New Zealand	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
NO	Norway	X							X
PE	Peru	no							
PH	Philippines	X		X			X		
PT	Portugal	X	X						
KR	Republic of Korea	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
YU	Serbia and Montenegro	X							
SG	Singapore	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SK	Slovakia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SL	Slovenia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
ES	Spain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SE	Sweden	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CH	Switzerland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TH	Thailand	X	X						
TN	Tunisia	X							
UA	Ukraine	X							
UK	United Kingdom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
US	United States of America	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
UY	Uruguay	X							
Evaluated Websites: 71		**59**	**36**	**25**	**28**	**22**	**34**	**24**	**18**
		(100%)	**(83%)**	**(51%)**	**(36%)**	**(40%)**	**(31%)**	**(49%)**	**(34%)**	**(26%)**

Patent Documentation Group, June 2006.

[Annex II follows]

ANNEX II

**RECOMMENDED MINIMUM CONTENTS
FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICES' WEB SITES**

*adopted by the Standing Committee on Information Technologies
at its fourth Plenary session on December 10, 1999*

INTRODUCTION

1.   This document intends to provide guidance to Intellectual Property Offices (IPOs) regarding the presentation and contents of their Web sites made available through the Internet. The recommendations are not limited to patents for inventions but cover all the intellectual property rights dealt with by the respective IPO. If an IPO creates a new Web site or changes the contents/layout thereof, the Office is invited to inform the International Bureau of WIPO of that fact in order for the International Bureau to establish a hyperlink to the individual URL of the IPO. The links are listed under "Site Addresses of IPOs" on the WIPO Web site, http://www.wipo.int.

RECOMMENDED CONTENT FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY WEB SITES

2.   The content of Intellectual Property Web sites should be presented in the language(s) of the national office. At least the homepage and the most important pages (e.g., information on how to apply for intellectual property protection) should also be presented in English.

3.   Intellectual Property Web sites should provide information about the procedures of the national office and other information to assist users of the national system. For example, Intellectual Property Web sites should contain:

   —   basic information about national IP rights,

   —   technical documents (e.g., guidelines, classification information),

   —   legal documents (e.g., treaties, laws),

   —   downloadable forms,

   —   fee schedules,

   —   annual reports (statistics) of the national office,

   —   links to other Intellectual Property Web sites,

   —   Intellectual Property information data,

   —   notices about changes in national intellectual property laws or administration,

   —   a News Section, or an Update Index, covering at least a six-month time period.

4.   Intellectual Property Web sites should contain information that is helpful to users, especially those who are new to the intellectual property field. For example, Intellectual Property Web sites should contain:

   —   information about the procedures of the national office in the form of basic facts and frequently asked questions (FAQs);

   —   descriptions of products and services provided by the national office, including how to obtain them, their cost, and the media in which they are available; and

   —   references to sources for assistance or information, such as libraries and legal representatives or chambers.

5.   Intellectual Property Web sites should contain navigational aids to assist users in locating information on the site. For example, Intellectual Property Web sites should contain a site search capability and/or a site index. Nevertheless the homepage should contain an overview on the whole Web site as well as an indication on services free of charge and services available only with costs. Furthermore, an indication on the date of the last update should be given on the homepage, or preferably on each page of the Web site.

6.   Intellectual Property Web sites may contain information to allow users to contact designated employees of the national office. For example, the site could contain the e-mail address, mailing address, phone and fax number for the office per se, points of contacts to receive and respond to external inquiries, and an e-mail address for Web-related help consistent with standard web support practices.

7.   To the extent possible, Intellectual Property Web sites should provide searchable databases or a link to databases relating to intellectual property documents of the IPO (such as legal status information). Links to other searchable databases should be included where appropriate.

RECOMMENDED DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY WEB SITES

8.   Intellectual Property Web sites should preferably post contents in HTML 3.2 (HTML 4.0 when the standard stabilizes), and standard browser image file types (e.g., gif, jpg). The second preferred format for posting administrative or informational text-only documents is ASCII text. Large downloadable files may also be made available via FTP.

9.   Web pages should use international standard character sets to encode their content. All web pages shall carry a distinct identifier for the particular international character used for the purpose of assisting users with browsers that may not be configured to display the character set.

10.   Documents used internally, e.g., documents in image formats, should be made available in the format used internally if it is practical to view that format with a browser. If a browser plug-in is required to view such documents (e.g. Adobe PDF or TIFF), the plug-in or a link to the plug-in should be provided.

11.   Web pages should degrade gracefully (i.e., pages containing JavaScript, Java or images should be legible on browsers that cannot deal with JavaScript, Java or images).

12.   Intellectual Property Web sites should be kept simple in order to reduce loading times. The use of images should be minimized.

13.   Intellectual Property Web sites should take extra care if there is a desire to use frames. When frames are used care should be taken not to exclude users with browsers that don't handle frames. The design of sites with frames needs to take into account limitations introduced by viewing the page on a small screen, and testing should be done to ensure the frames do not create navigation difficulties.

14.   Html pages, especially the Home Page, should include the html tags relied upon by WWW search engines for indexing sites (i.e., <TITLE>, <META>, <H1>) whenever possible.

15.   Documents presented as ASCII text should be enclosed within minimal html tags (<HTML>, <HEAD>, <BODY>) and <PRE>…</PRE> tags whenever possible. A <TITLE> tag is also highly desirable.

16.   Intellectual Property Web site servers should use the default HTTP port 80.

17.   Intellectual Property Web sites should have a high degree of accessibility in order to provide information to the widest possible audience and enable usability for individuals with disabilities. For example, Intellectual Property Web sites could provide:

    —   alternative text (<ALT>) for all images,

    —   alternative text for imagemap hot spots,

    —   captioned audio,

    —   text to describe video, and

    —   alternative access to frames or scripts.

ADVANCED SERVICES FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY WEB SITES

18.   It is recognized that in order to support applications, such as e-commerce, image display, electronic filing, and encryption, the system requirements of the user's web browser may be higher. As an example, many Intellectual Property Web sites already offer full-text searching of their databases with retrieval of images stored in the TIFF format. Newer or more feature-full browsers support the use of plug-ins (TIFF is not a browser standard) that would enable the IPO to offer their content without modification. Intellectual Property Web sites should clearly indicate to the user the minimum system/browser requirements, including links to any plug-ins.

19.   Intellectual Property Web sites should be tested by the publishing office for compatibility with such browsers as may be used in their national environment and in the international community.

[End of Annex II and of document]