STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

WORKING GROUPS
Second Session
Geneva, December 6 to 10, 1999

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM CONTENTS FOR WEB SITES OF INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY OFFICES

Document prepared by the International Bureau

1.   The Annex to this document contains a reproduction of a document relating to the contents and presentation of Web sites of I.P. Offices. The document has been prepared by the United States Patent and Trademark Office in accordance with a decision taken by the SCIT Plenary at its second session, in Feburary 1999. For further background information, please refer to document SCIT/2/8, paragraphs 29 to 31.

> 2.   *The Standards and Documentation Working Group is invited to discuss and adopt the proposed recommendations.*

[Annex follows]

July 14, 1999

Mr. Yo Takagi
Director
Inter-Office Information Services
World Intellectual Property Organization
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20
SWITZERLAND

Re: Recommended Minimum Contents for Intellectual Property Web Sites

Dear Mr. Takagi:

At its second session, the Standing Committee on Information Technologies requested that the United States delegation provide a paper focusing on minimum requirements and basic instructions for contents of Intellectual Property Web Sites. The requested paper is attached.

Sincerely,

Cheryl E. Kazenske
Intellectual Property Program Manager
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

PAPER BY THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM CONTENTS FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
WEB SITES

30 June 1999

1. At its second session, the Standing Committee on Information Technologies
    requested that the United States delegation provide a paper focusing on minimum
    requirements and basic instructions for contents of Intellectual Property Web sites

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 and also in English.

3. Intellectual Property Web sites should provide information about the practices of
    the national office and other information to assist users of the national system. For
    example, Intellectual Property Web sites should contain
    - technical documents (e.g., guidelines, classification information),
    - legal documents (e.g., treaties, laws),
    - downloadable forms,
    - fee schedules,
    - annual reports of the national office, and
    - links to other Intellectual Property Web sites.

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 practices 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, such as libraries and legal representatives.

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.

6.   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. Intellectual Property Web sites should use Adobe PDF only for those administrative or informational documents where there is a need to preserve physical page layout for printing or document security purposes, or when html conversion is impractical because of the complexity of the document. Large downloadable files should also be available via FTP. Documents used internally, e.g., documents in image formats, may be made available in the format used internally if conversion would be impractical. If a browser plug-in is required to view such documents (e.g. Adobe PDF), the plug-in or a link to the plug-in should be provided.

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

8.   To the extent possible, Intellectual Property Web sites should provide a searchable database of information contained in the published patent documents of the national office. Searchable databases of other intellectual property documents should be included, where appropriate.

Recommended Design Principles for Intellectual Property Web Sites

9.   HTML 3.2 is the recommended standard. HTML 4.0 can be recommended when the standard stabilizes. 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).

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

11. Intellectual Property Web sites should avoid the use of frames completely since they are not sufficiently standardized at this time, and may cause navigation problems.

12. 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.

13.   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.

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

15.   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 should 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

16.   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.

[End of Annex and of document]