



## IP Federation archive made available to the public

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**Legal scholars, business historians, and others now have access to a wealth of previously unavailable material showing how business reacted to and lobbied on IP law from 1920 to 1989.**

Until recently, the archive of the IP Federation was stored in a warehouse in Chatham, save for a few items retained in the IP Federation office. Operating under the IP Federation's document retention and destruction policy, Council deemed the archive as suitable for donation to a scholarly library subject to a "30-year rule". As a result, since mid-2021, this material has been publicly available in the Weston Library in Oxford, which houses the "special collections" of the Bodleian, the main research library of the University. Legal scholars and business historians have access to a wealth of material from the foundation of the Federation in 1920 up to the end of 1989.

The IP Federation chose to approach Oxford University for various reasons, including because it has a longstanding Intellectual Property Rights Centre. Dev Gangjee, currently Professor of Intellectual Property Law at Oxford, supported the case for the acceptance of the archive by the Bodleian, and a senior archivist, Lucy McCann, worked with the IP Federation to organise the selection and receipt of the material. The material is sorted into 67 academic archive boxes, each approximately 7 cm deep, made of acid-free cardboard. There are boxes containing, from the early years of the Federation, wonderful well-preserved minute books with gold lettering on the spine and highly legible manuscript entries. Loose papers are grouped chronologically in acid-free cardboard folders within boxes.

Coincidentally, the activities of the Federation *since* the end of 1989 have been written up and published professionally through approximately annual reviews, now all on the internet at <https://www.ipfederation.com/ip-federation-review/>. The first review was published in 1990 as *REVIEW of trends and events* under the Federation's previous brand of "TMPDF" (standing for the contemporary legal name, "Trade Marks Patents and Designs Federation"). The present *IP Federation Review* is the 29<sup>th</sup> in the series. Therefore, the Oxford archive joins up chronologically with what was already publicly available, so that scholars have the opportunity of studying business's views on IP matters from the foundation of the Federation in 1920 to the present day – although in principle a further donation in due course of post-1989 material would allow them to form a more complete view.

The original Memorandum of Association of the Federation stated that its first "object" was, in IP matters, to promote the interests of "traders in the British

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Empire and Foreign Countries” – i.e., translated to the present day, national and international business. (It has never been the Federation’s role to represent the legal professions.) To achieve this object, the Federation has always taken a highly commercially-informed policy view of IP law, a focus that makes the Oxford archive of especial interest.

The Federation Council and Committee minutes included in the archive were meticulously and informatively drafted, and supporting material was retained; so, the archive includes, for instance, official consultations and reports, correspondence with other representative organisations, and the final lobbying output of the Federation. It needs to be remembered that the archive was all created in pre-internet days, when a key service of the Federation to its members was to inform them of developments worldwide (regardless of whether these were within the scope of its lobbying). From 1952 to 1989, the Federation issued hard-copy monthly private newsletters based on material received from third parties. Not only the Federation documents in the archive but also many third-party documents will be the only copies in the public domain – or even the only copies in existence.

The user of the Oxford archive will be guided, first, by the library index <https://archives.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repositories/2/resources/9593>. The listing of the contents of each box may merely be a general one specifying the range of dates of the material and identifying the IP issues of the time. In some cases it identifies particularly intriguing historical items such as –

in 1943, “Pamphlet ... being a detailed report by the [Federation’s] patents committee on matters arising out of wartime emergency legislation;” and

ca 1970-1, “ ‘Paper by T[imothy] W[ade] Roberts for CIPA informals’ discussing ‘peripheral’ vs ‘central’ claiming (a key issue in the runup to the European Patent Convention ...).”

Often, the user of the archive will be greatly assisted by manual indexes assiduously created by past Federation secretaries and included in the boxes. Office computerisation began to resemble what we know today only around 1985. Therefore, manual indexing by topic was essential if the Secretary was to be able to retrieve any previous internal discussions of a particular topic, for instance when a new official consultation was started.

By making this material available, the IP Federation and the University of Oxford have, we believe, done a considerable public service.

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