



The UK Intellectual Property Office and Ipsum

Following the Hargreaves Review, a number of public consultations have been set up and various publications have been issued by the UK Intellectual Property Office (IPO) in 2011. The IP Federation has provided comments where appropriate.

One area on which the IP Federation has consistently lobbied the IPO is the provision of an online file inspection facility. We have been pleased to see that 2011 at long last saw the introduction of Ipsum - the Online Patent Information and Document Inspection Service - by which online file inspection as well as patent status information is provided. The IP Federation was invited to participate in a trial run of Ipsum, following which the full public service was launched in early October by Baroness Wilcox, the Minister for Intellectual Property. Ipsum allows access not just to status information and IPO issued documentation such as examination and search reports, but also to many other documents and information from the IPO files including applicant communications, third party observations, and search fields and classifications utilised for a particular UK patent right. As interest grows in collaborative search and examination between Patent Offices, this can only enhance the IPO's standing and participation in such projects.

The PPH (Patent Prosecution Highway) system marches onwards, but with an increasingly complex and confusing number of possibilities for ways in which to expedite patent grant in various countries. The complexity of the systems now in place must be a huge deterrent to utilisation of a system that had the potential to reduce the delays to achieving patent grant for those Applicants wanting early grant and protection to support products taken quickly to the marketplace. The IP Federation has always maintained the view that acceleration of the patenting process whether in the UK, Europe or beyond, must not be at the sacrifice of quality of search and examination, and we look to the IPO to use its influence within the PPH process to simplify and streamline the various PPH systems that exist yet without losing the confidence of users in the quality of the patent grants that result.

The IP Federation continues participation in the PPWG group (the Patent Practice Working Group) but has been saddened to note the closure of the IPO Patent Search and Advisory Service on 6 October 2011, the most because the closure occurred at short notice and without any advance alert or consultation with the PPWG group. It is hoped that this will be just a blip in what otherwise has been a steady improvement in user consultation and cooperation between the IPO and the IP Federation.

Carol Arnold, 9 January 2012