



European IP Helpdesk

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European IP Helpdesk
Finding Patents

19.11.2025





European IP Helpdesk

- Service initiative of the European Commission
- Addressing **current and potential beneficiaries of EU-funded projects, researchers and EU SMEs**
- Free-of-charge first-line support on intellectual property (IP)
- Hands-on IP and innovation management support
- International pool of IP experts from various thematic fields
- Unique cooperation scheme with the Enterprise Europe Network: 43 ambassadors from 26 EU countries



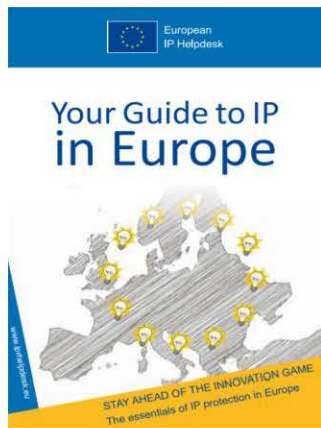


The EC IP Helpdesks





EC IP (SME) Helpdesk Hub – Gateway to Information



- E-learning modules & more
- Guides / Topic, country, sector-specific factsheets / Infographics
- Case studies



Upcoming events



20
MAY
2025

Training and workshops

[EU - Webinar: Freedom to Operate](#)

📺 Live streaming available

28
MAY
2025

Training and workshops

[EU - Webinar: Finding Patents](#)

📺 Live streaming available

11
JUN
2025

Training and workshops

[Intellectual property for deep-tech businesses - IP strategy day](#)

📺 Online only

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17
JUN
2025

Training and workshops

[EU - Webinar: Addressing IP impact and innovation in EU projects](#)

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18
JUN
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Training and workshops

[Intellectual property for deep-tech businesses - IP management day](#)

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2025

Training and workshops

[EU - Webinar & Horizon Results Platform: Publishing Vs Patenting](#)

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Thank you!

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About me

BSc (Physical) Chemistry (*Exon UK*)

PhD Neutron Science (*Exon UK*)

Harwell (UK), Rutherford Appleton (UK), ILL Grenoble (FR)

Royal Society of Chemistry, Institute of Physics,
Science Council (UK)

HM Govt, X-ray, electron, laser beam microanalysis

Looooooooooooooooong time at European Patent Office (NL, AT)

Patent examiner (electron and ion optics) IT manager, internet
services Espacenet et al, manager, research manager

Consultant; bring worlds of STEM and IP together IPHelpdesk,
EUIPO, WIPO

Cambridge University Technology Management teaching and
research (*Cantab UK*)





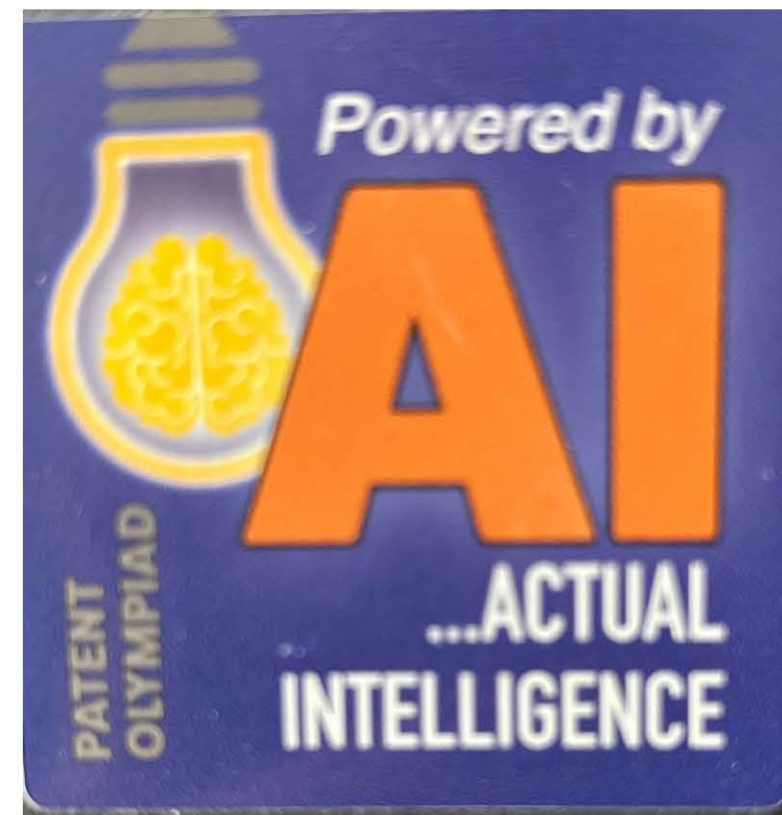
Finding Patents

Independent of:

Search tool

Database

AI





Nigel S. Clarke,
The basics of patent searching,
World Patent Information,
Volume 54, Supplement,
2018,
Pages S4-S10,
ISSN 0172-2190,

1. Introduction

This article is based on a presentation delivered by the author at the Search Matters Seminar held at the European Patent Office (EPO) in The Hague in June 2018. The presentation was commissioned by the Search Matters organisers expressly to cater for those participants who were complete newcomers to searching patents. This article covers some useful basic concepts in patent searching and some “tips and tricks” which hopefully the absolute beginner might find helpful. The article also incorporates ideas presented by the author over many years, in the “European Patent Information Beginner’s Seminar” series and in introductory seminars [1,2].

The article is also about the psychology of patent searching, the mind-set, concepts, strategies and tactics, and is deliberately intended to be a general introductory entry. It is not intended to promote any particular search tools or databases. However, by way of example only, search results and techniques in this article are illustrated by use of EPO tools and databases.

2. The 64,000 dollar question: why search patents?

The trivial answer to this question is “because they are there” [3]. However there are many genuine and justifiable reasons for searching patents [4], to find out about the most recent inventions, to study the development of a particular technology, or to find the

patents by an eminent academic, for example. The publication of patent documents, which necessarily contain a full technical description of the invention, is a mandatory step in the patent process. Patent offices around the world are required by convention to publish the patents registered with them. A patent cannot be a patent unless it is published [5].

Most patent offices publish patent applications before any other publications. The existing volume of patent documents is huge. Publicly available free patent databases, for example Espacenet, Patentscope and Depatbster [6] give access to tens of millions of patent documents. The cumulative volume of patent documents is growing rapidly too: 2.9 million patent applications are reported as having been filed in 2015 worldwide [7]. The patent process requires that all of these be published, despite the volume and rapid growth in publications; searching patents is assisted by indexing or classification schemes, which allow you to focus your search direction, early on. Patents not only contain technical information about inventions, patents are legal instruments and confer rights and privileges on their owners. So it may be that you would want to identify and characterise the legal status of particular patents. The patent documents also contain contact information about the applicants, the people or organisations who filed the patent application in the first place. Patents also list inventors, the clever individuals who had the ideas, and did the work in laboratories or factories or workshops; inventors and applicants can be identified by searching patents, and this information can be commercially important.

Email address: n.clarke@epo.org

<https://doi.org/10.1385/wpi.2018.02.000>

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- Finding – not just searching



<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/qLQJdK1Lmi0/maxresdefault.jpg>



Finding Patents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. The 64,000 dollar question: why search patents?](#)
- [3. Before you begin](#)
- [4. Types of patent search](#)
- [5. Keywords or.....?](#)
- [6. Why shouldn't I search in patent titles only?](#)
- [7. Cut to the chase – patent classifications](#)
- [8. What's in a name?](#)
- [9. The same, but different – patent families](#)
- [10. As close, as close as can be – citations](#)
- [11. Alive or dead? Legal status](#)
- [12. Keep your finger on the pulse – alerting and monitoring](#)
- [13. Patent search resources](#)



Introduction

- Background
 - EPO Patent Information Beginners Courses
 - EPO Search Matters Seminars
- Concepts
 - Mindset, strategies, tactics, tips and tricks



Introduction

- How did you get here?
- What is your company 's interest?
- Why are you searching?
- Who sees your search results?
- What information are you looking for?



64,000 dollar question – why search patents?





64,000 dollar question – why search patents?

- Huge resource
 - >100,000,000 patent documents
 - 3,600,000 filings in 2023 (WIPO)
 - +2.7%(WIPO)
 - <https://www.wipo.int/en/ipfactsandfigures/patents>



64,000 dollar question – why search patents?

- Unique content
 - technical
 - legal
 - commercial
- Curated



Types of patent search

- State of the art –finding what 's out there
- Prior art/novelty – patent filing
- Opposition – against someone else 's grant
- Invalidity – against someone else 's existing patent
- Freedom to operate – can I use my invention?



Freedom to operate FTO

Time

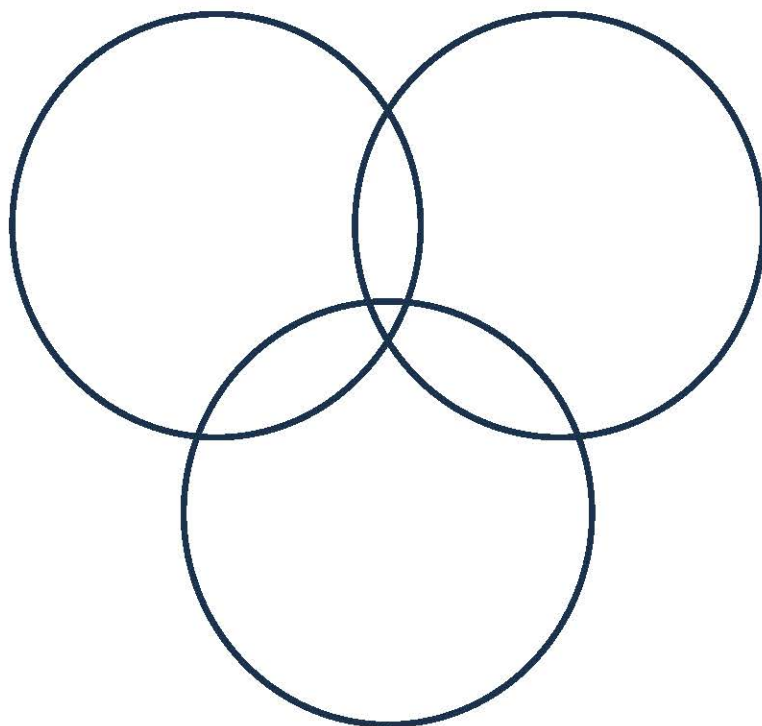
When

Place

Where

Technology

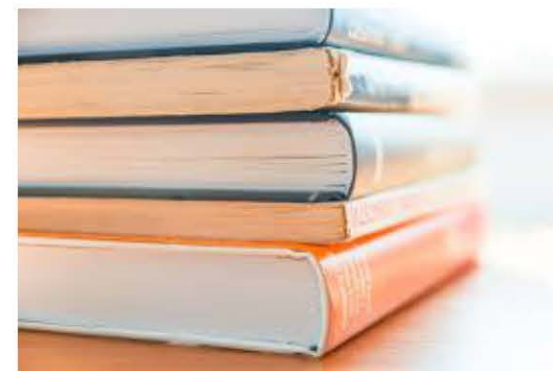
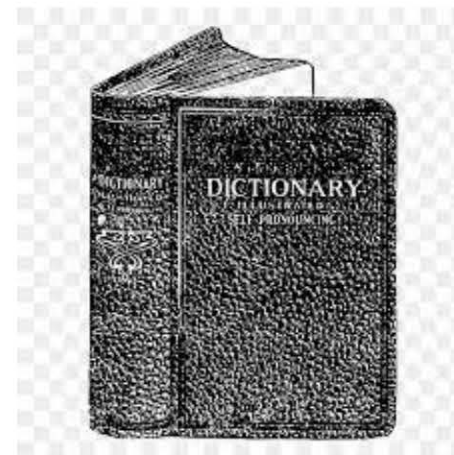
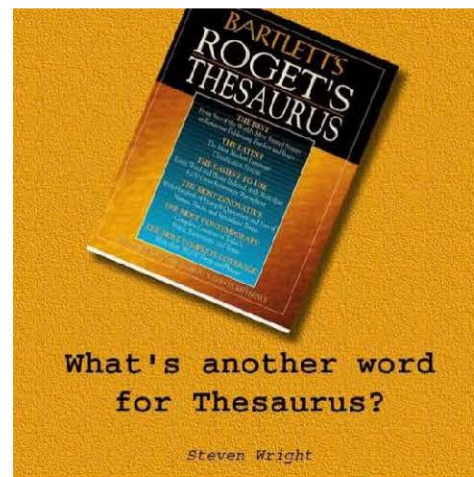
What





Before you begin

- Read around
- Use other sources
- Find examples





Before you begin

- Recycle food packaging
- Read around:
 - Composite
 - Laminated
 - Aseptic





Before you begin

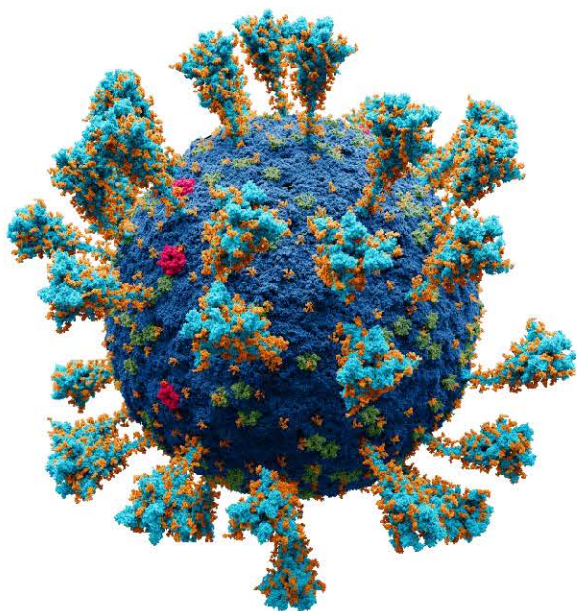
- Example company
 - “TetraPak”
 - Patents
 - classifications





Keywords or.....?

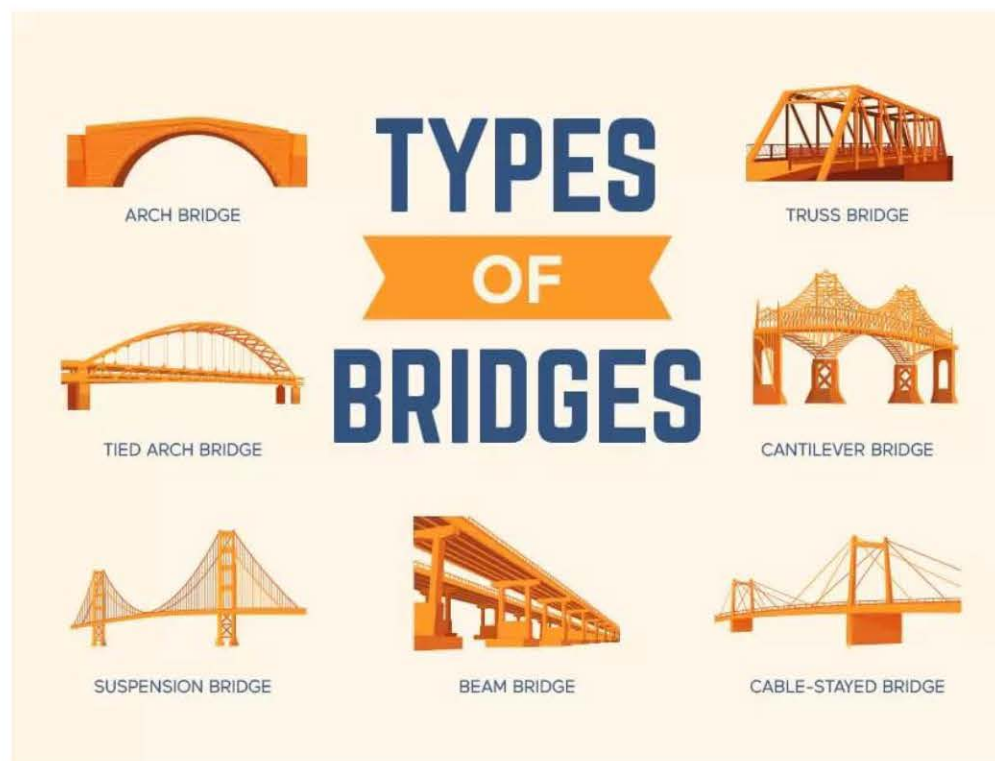
- Context





Keywords or.....?

- Context



<https://www.bigrentz.com/blog/types-of-bridges>



Keywords or.....?

- Context





Keywords or.....?

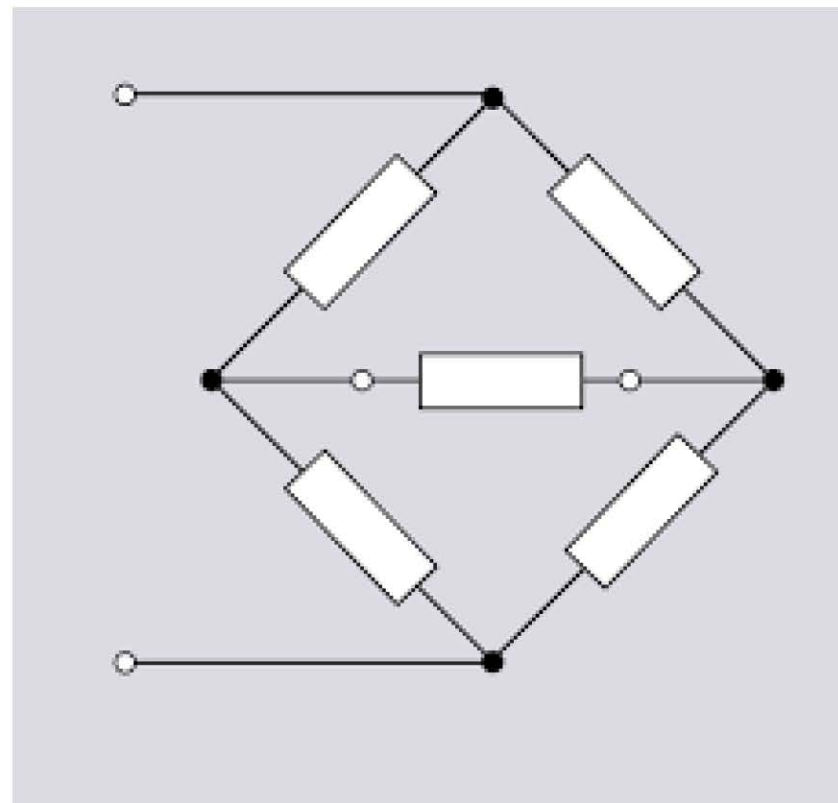
- Context





Keywords or.....?

- Context

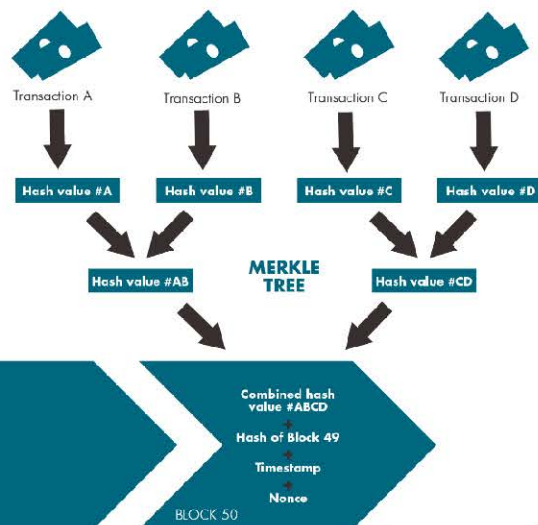
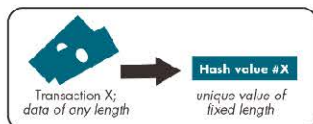




Keywords or.....?

- Context

HOW THE BLOCKCHAIN WORKS



Reproduction of an original figure in "The Great Chain of Being Sure About Things" by the Economist





Keywords or.....?

- Synonyms
- Acetic acid = ethanoic acid = ethan-1-carboxylic acid
- Dihydrogen monoxide = water
- Hinge = articulation
- Silicon chip = IC = integrated circuit = microchip



Keywords or.....?

- The special language of patents
- Writing instrument
- Oral hygiene device





Keywords or.....?

- The special language of patents
- “plurality” = “more than one”





Keywords or.....?

- The special language of patents
- New words “detachably attached”

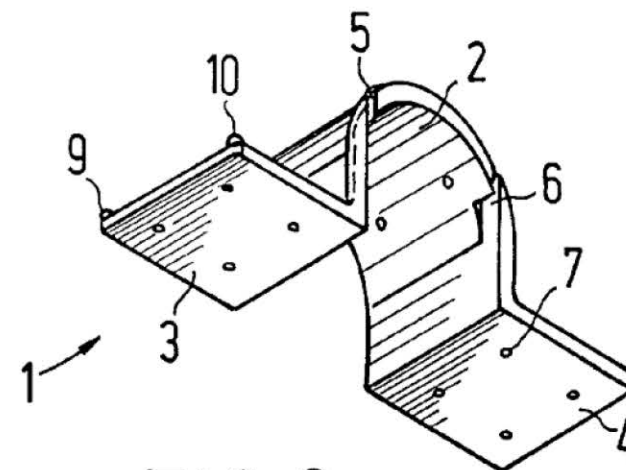


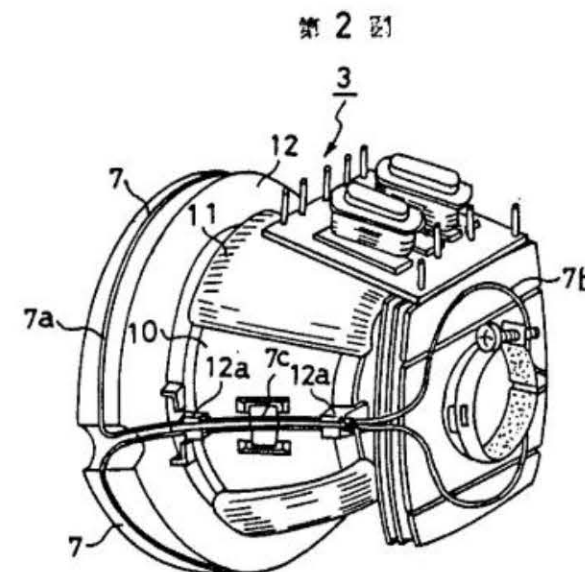
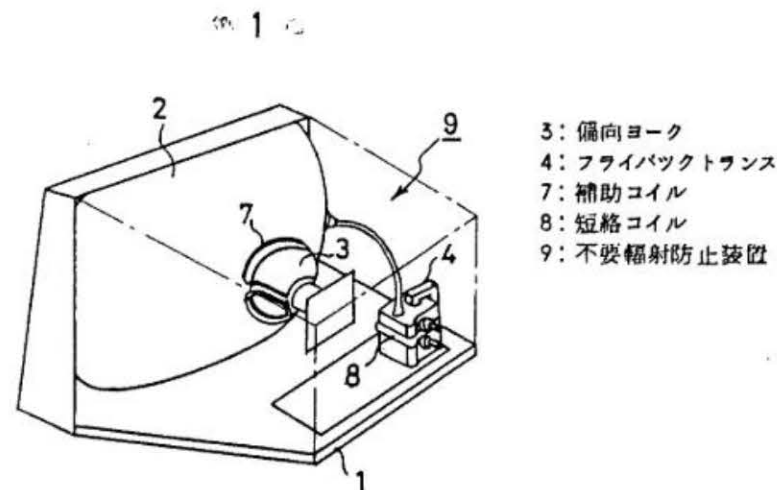
FIG. 3

- “removable”



Keywords or.....?

- Translations
- “Useless radiation preventer”
- “Stray radiation preventer”





Keywords or.....?

- Spellings and mis-spellings
- “Analyse” or “Analyze”
- “Fluorescent” or “Flourescent”
- “Receiver” or “Reciever”



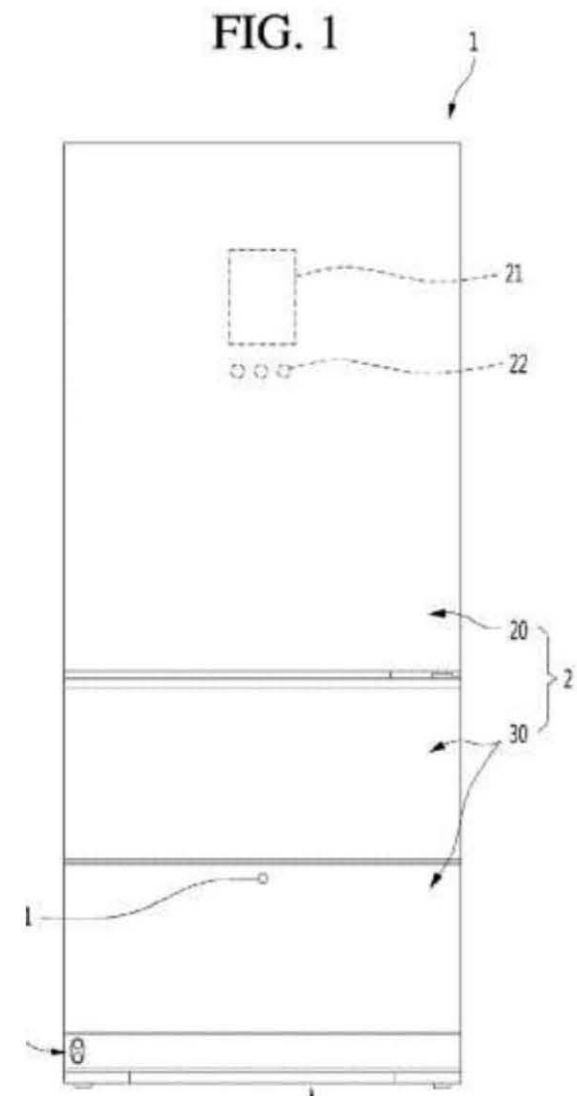
Why shouldn't I search in patent titles only?

- Uninformative
 - “Pharmaceuticals”
 - “Improvements”
 - “Methods” “Process” “Device” “Apparatus”



Why shouldn't I search in patent titles only?

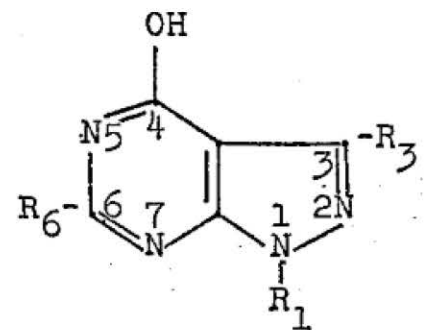
- Ambiguous:
 - “Refrigerator” (one word title 19,000 hits)
 - E.g. EP4361543





Why shouldn't I search in patent titles only?

- Very (overly) specific
 - “3-(5-NITRO-2-FURYL) 1H PYRAZOLO[3,4] PYRIMIDINS - 4(5H)-ONES





Why shouldn't I search in patent titles only?

- Only if you really really know the title
- “Generally spherical object with
Floppy filaments to promote sure
capture”





Why shouldn't I search in patent titles only?

- Better to search in abstract

(54) **Apparatus for manufacturing green bricks for the brick manufacturing industry**

(57) The invention relates to an apparatus (1) for manufacturing green bricks from clay for the brick manufacturing industry, comprising a circulating conveyor (3) carrying mould containers combined to mould container parts (4), a reservoir (5) for clay arranged above the mould containers, means for carrying clay out of the reservoir (5) into the mould containers, means (9) for pressing and trimming clay in the mould containers,

means (11) for supplying and placing take-off plates for the green bricks (13) and means for discharging green bricks released from the mould containers, characterized in that the apparatus further comprises means (22) for moving the mould container parts (4) filled with green bricks such that a protruding edge is formed on at least one side of the green bricks.



Why shouldn't I search in patent titles only?

- Even better to search in full text
 - Abstract – summary
 - Description – enabling disclosure
 - Claims – the legal bit

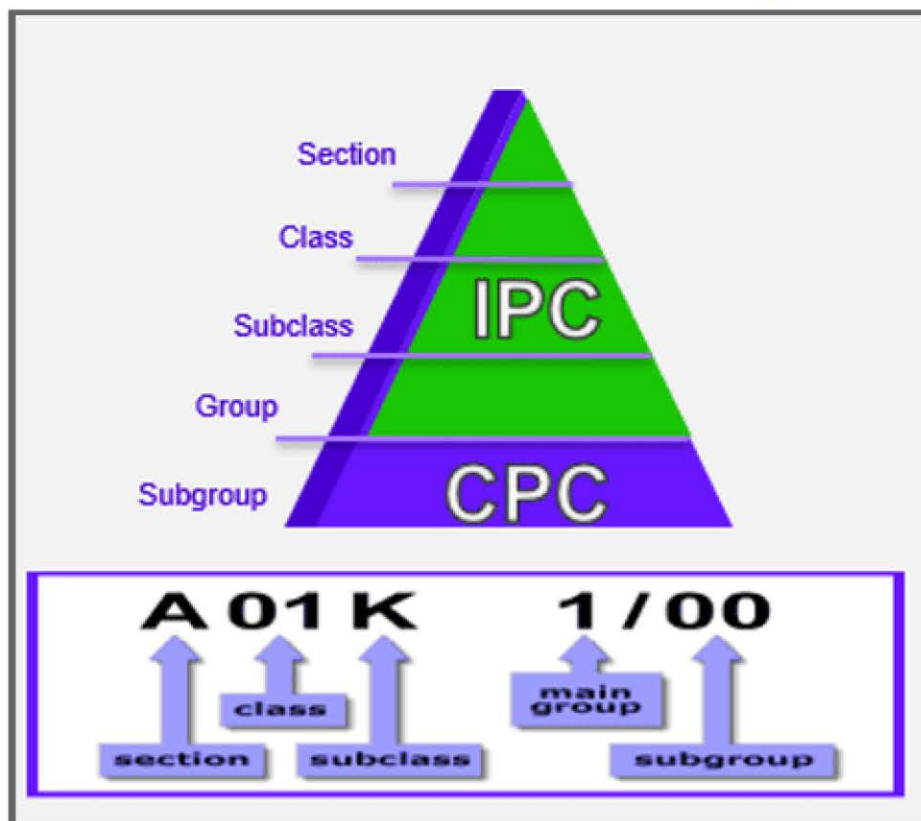


Cut to the chase – patent classifications

- Like a ZIP or Postal Code for patents
- Patents in closely related technologies are classified together
 - (same ZIP or Postal Code)
- Facilitates searching and examination



Cut to the chase – patent classifications



<https://clarivate.com/derwent/learning/resources/derwent-innovation/derwent-research-guides/research-patents-in-a-specific-technology-domain/>



Cut to the chase – patent classifications

Section: The highest level of the code, which represents a broad technology area (e.g., A-Human Necessities)

Class: A major sub-area of the technology (e.g., A01-Agriculture)

Subclass: A specific, broad application for the technology area (e.g., A01K-Animal Husbandry)

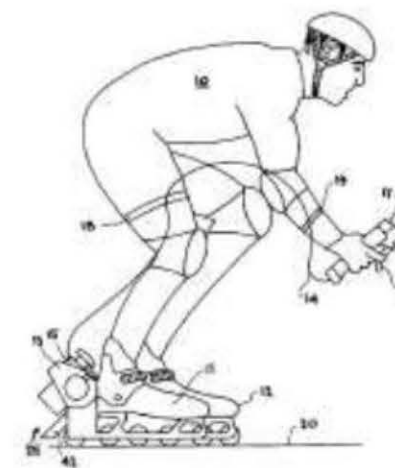
Main Group: Major components of technology for a particular application (e.g., A01K 1/00Housing Animals)

Subgroup: Precisely defines a specific field within a main group



Cut to the chase – patent classifications

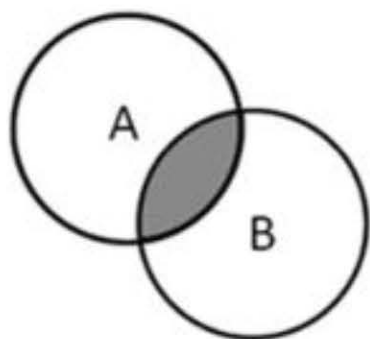
- Relevant classification plus keywords – very powerful!
- A63C17/12 – Roller skates or skateboards with driving mechanisms - >2500 hits
- Keyword “internal combustion engine”
- Combine – 6 hits



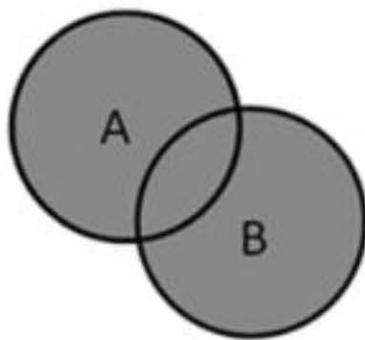


Boolean operators combine search terms

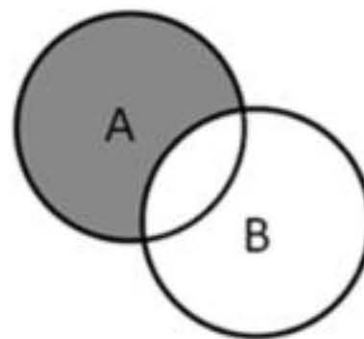
The AND operator restricts the number of hits
The OR operator expands the number of hits
The NOT operator also restricts the number of hits



A AND B



A OR B



A NOT B



What's in a name?

- Two types of name
- Inventor
- Applicant (patent owner)





What 's in a name?

- Applicant (patent owner) name
- Inc. GmbH. Ltd. AG.
- Holding companies
- Filing Companies





What's in a name?

- Inventor name
- Misspellings: “Clarke” “Clark”
- Variations: “Asterix the Gaul”,
“Gaul, Asterix the”, “A.T Gaul”
- Genuine different spellings
“Clarke” “Clark” “Brown” “Browne”





The same, but different – patent families



FR
IT
DE
ES
GB
US
AU
NZ
JP
CN



The same, but different – patent families

- Same invention
- Filed in different countries
- Within 12 months
- Useful for translations



As close, as close can be - citations

- Like citations in scientific papers
- Examiner opinion on patentability
 - Novelty
 - Inventiveness
 - Usefulness
- Minimum list of most relevant citations



As close, as close can be - citations

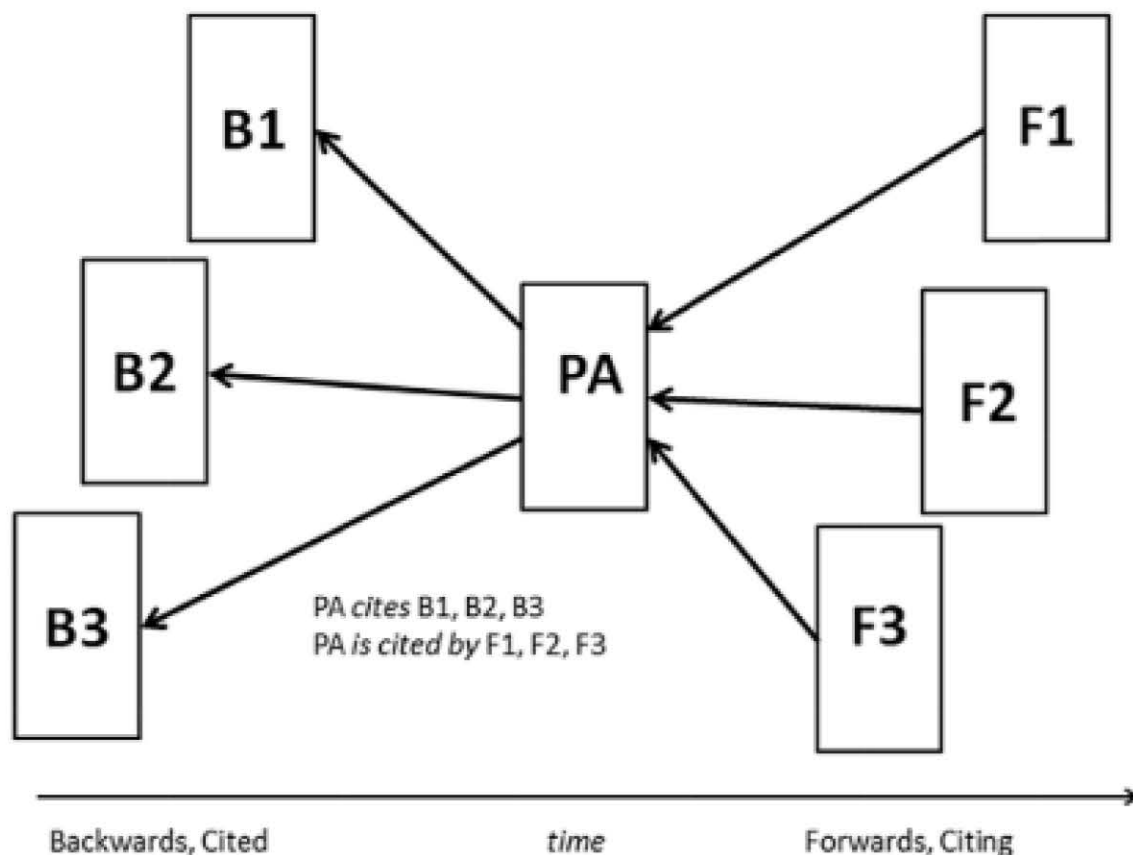


Fig. 1. Forward and backward citations cited and citing documents.



As close, as close can be - citations



World Patent Information
Volume 54, Supplement, September 2018, Pages S23-S28



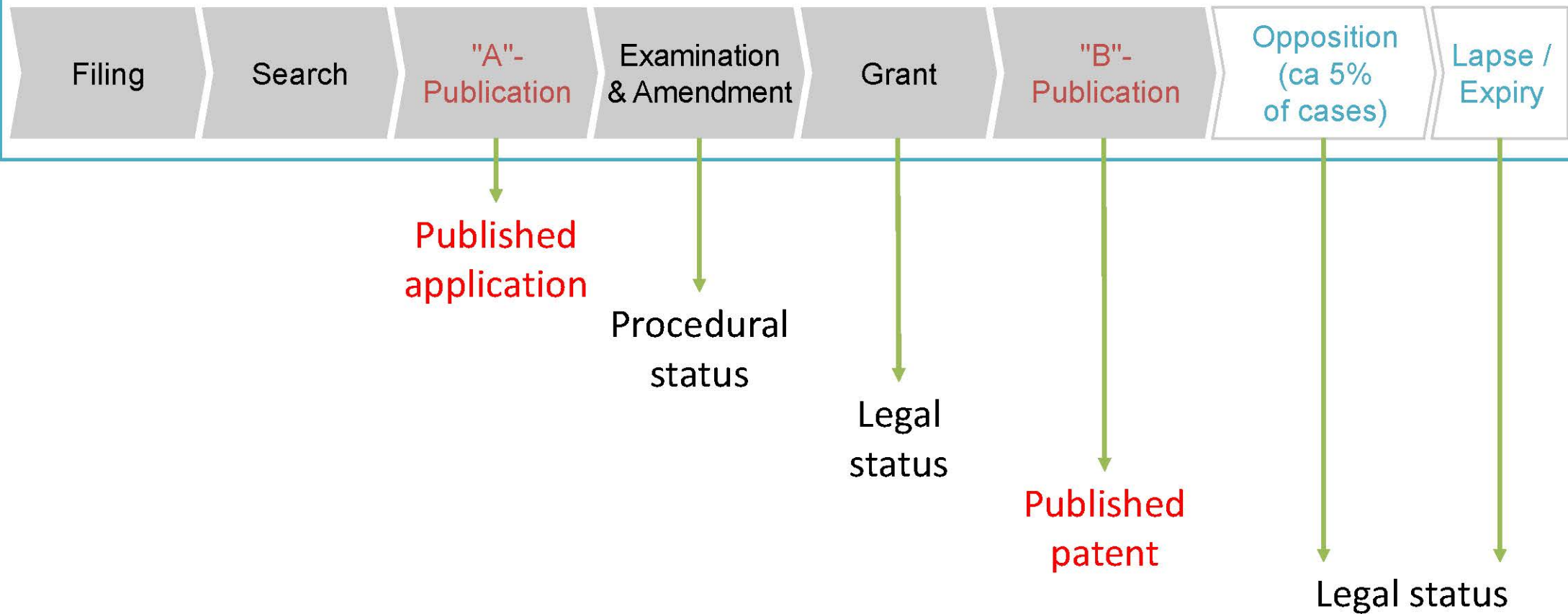
How to interpret EPO search reports

[Kris Loveniers](#)

Kris Loveniers,
How to interpret EPO
search reports,
World Patent Information,
Volume 54, Supplement,
2018,
Pages S23-S28,
ISSN 0172-2190,



Legal Status Patent granting process





Alive or dead? Legal status



lapsed





Alive or dead? Legal status

- Federated Register



Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

European Patent Register

Deutsch English Français
Contact

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Smart search Advanced search Help

EP3582176
European procedure
EP About this file
EP Legal status
EP Federated register
EP Event history
EP Citations
EP Patent family
EP All documents

EP Federated register: EP3582176

🔍 Refine search ⬇ ST36 ➡ Espacenet 📄 Submit observations 📄 Report error 🖨 Print

IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS			
Application No.	Publication No.	Applicant	IPC
EP19196620	EP3582176	FotoNation Limited	G06T3/60

Only designated contracting states, extension states and validation states providing the Federated Register Service are listed below.

	Status	Application No.	Publication No.	Proprietor	Invalidation date	Not in force since	Renewal fees last paid	Record last updated
➡ AT	Patent not validated	EP19196620	EP3582176	FotoNation Limited	10.02.2021	28.10.2020	---	---
➡ BE	Patent lapsed	EP19196620	EP3582176	FotoNation Limited	---	30.09.2021	---	12.05.2023
➡ BG	No data provided by the national patent office for this patent							
➡ CH/LI	Patent not in force	EP19196620	EP3582176	FotoNation Limited	27.04.2023	27.04.2023	---	27.04.2023
➡ CZ	Patent not validated	CZ2019-196620	EP3582176	FotoNation Limited	10.05.2021	11.09.2019	---	12.05.2021
➡ DE	Patent in force	EP19196620	EP3582176	FotoNation Limited, Galway, IE	---	---	---	06.10.2023
➡ EE	No data provided by the national patent office for this patent							

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→ [What does "not in force since" mean?](#)
→ [What does "record last updated" mean?](#)
→ [Why is there a difference](#)



Alive or dead? Legal status

- Global Dossier



Also AU CA IL WIPO



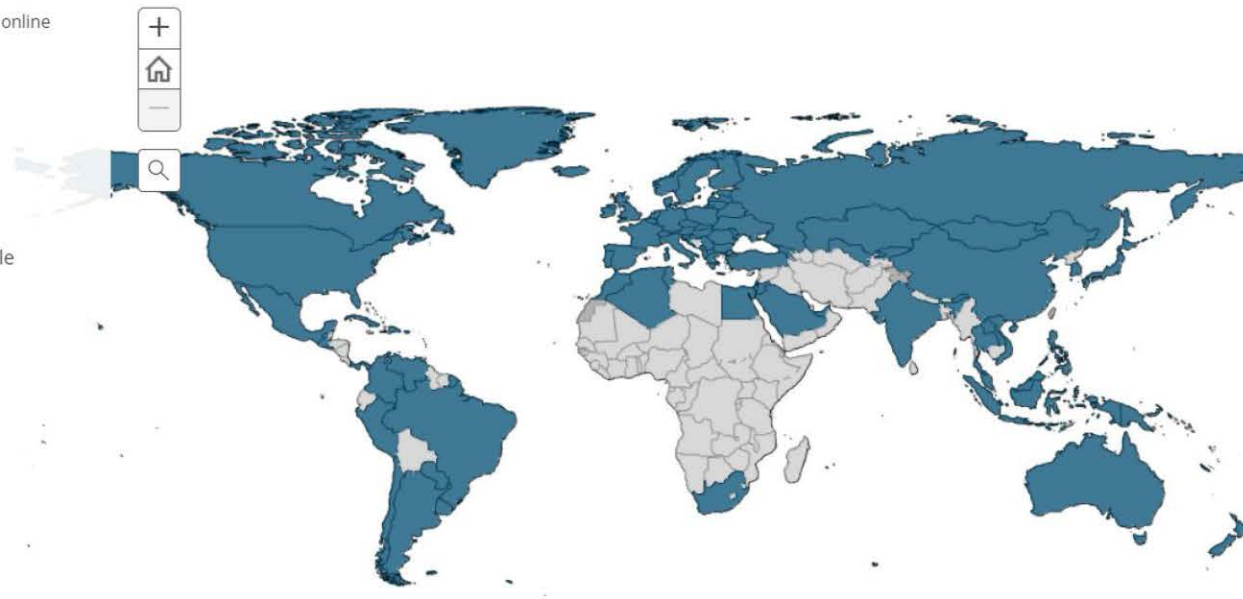
Alive or dead? Legal status

WIPO
Patent Register
Portal

Jurisdictions that have an online
patent register

Online Register

- Yes
- No
- No data available





Alive or dead? Legal status

Lapsed or expired



FR
IT
DE
ES
GB
US
AU
NZ
JP
CN

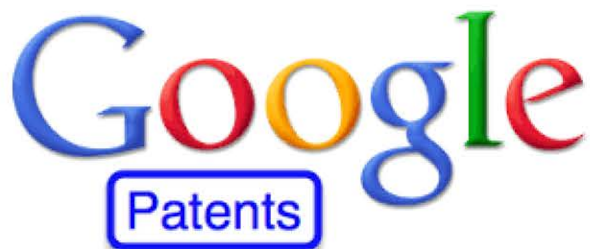


Keep your finger on the pulse – alerting and monitoring

- Alerting – new patent publications appearing
- Monitoring – changes in published patents



Patent search resources





stanfieldclarke@gmail.com

