

Improvement of IP administration

Greater efficiency in examinations and trials
Enhanced automation of IP administration



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Greater efficiency in examinations and trials

Faster and more efficient examinations and trials

KIPO has made a concerted effort to ensure that patent rights are granted swiftly and accurately, with a significantly reduced examination period. Following our intensive recruitment of examiners between 2002 and 2005, we extended our outsourcing of prior art searches in 2006 to 133,000 cases.

Recruitment of patent examiners

	2002	2003	2004	2005
Recruits	82	60	45	170
Total examiners	453	513	558	728

In IP disputes, a trial takes about 8.1 months for patents and utility models and 5.6 months for trademarks and industrial designs. To limit these periods to no more than 6 months, we recruited an additional 30 trial judges in 2006 and we plan to recruit a further 24 judges in 2007.

Improvement in the quality of examinations and trials

To increase the quality and efficiency of examinations, KIPO has improved the examination system. For example, we enhanced the transparency and quality of examinations by introducing a new system of examination notes and related prior art lists. We also introduced a novel system of examination teams, which offers greater consistency and expertise in examinations as well as an effective means of sharing work experience. Under the team system, teams of approximately ten examiners are responsible for particular types of technology.

We also took steps to increase the capabilities of our examiners, especially by expanding educational opportunities in the area of cutting-edge technologies. For example, we commissioned private organizations to offer on-site educational programs and academic seminars on fusion technologies, and we established research councils on cutting-edge technologies to enable examiners to share their expertise. Moreover, with regard to legislation, we assisted in the revision of patent and utility model laws so as to improve the quality of examinations.

These efforts enabled us to reduce the examination error rate in the 2006 examination quality review by 0.8 percent over the previous year, giving us a low overall error rate of 1.5 percent.

To improve the quality of our examinations for trademarks and industrial designs, we have continually adopted measures to improve the examination system and database.

In 2006, we focused on improving the quality of trademark examinations. For instance, we established an on-line cooperative examination system, whereby new examiners can improve the accuracy of their examinations by asking experienced examiners for timely consultations. Secondly, we reorganized our vast database of trademarks on the basis of the grounds for rejection, and we launched the reorganized database in the examination system to enable examiners to conveniently search for and use related precedents. Thirdly, we set up an intelligent search system, which allows swift and accurate searches for identical or similar registered trademarks.

Another area of focus for 2006 was improvement in the quality of industrial design examinations. By reorganizing more than six million items of examination data related to industrial designs, we improved the efficiency and accuracy of searches for industrial design prior art. We also promoted the development of design maps, which can be used for analysis of trends in design applications and for general information pertaining to design disputes.

As in previous years, we conducted a competition in 2006 among our examiners in relation to the trademark and design examination manual. The competition enables examiners to share their knowledge and expertise on examinations.



An examiner conducting a design examination

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Proceedings at the Intellectual Property Tribunal

Meetings of examiners and specialized research councils have also enhanced the expertise of examiners with regard to various laws and major IPR issues. Through these types of activities, examiners can use their expertise in the development of policies and practices related to trademark and design examinations.

In 2006, we also took steps to improve the quality of trials and appeals. For instance, to enhance the proficiency of judges, as well as the quality of trials, we provided substantial educational opportunities for new judges along with in-service training for experienced judges.

We also published the eighth version of *The Trial Handbook* in October 2006 to reflect all the amendments to the IP laws and ordinances since the seventh version (June 2004).

The regulations for establishing trial standards and assessing the quality of judgments were enacted in May 2006 to establish a new standard for trials. Under these regulations, a quality assessment committee examines trials from each field on a quarterly basis; the committee analyzes judgments and decisions on the cancellation of rights and evaluates ways of improving the quality of judgments.

Furthermore, as part of our ongoing legal education, the lawsuit research council gives presentations on lawsuit cases twice a month, focusing on lawsuit-related improvements.

Enhanced automation of IP administration Advancement of the KIPOnet system

Since introducing on-line filing of applications in 1999, KIPO expanded and developed its KIPOnet system so that by 2002 it had achieved a full-fledged paperless IP administration. The subsequent release of the KIPOnet II upgrade in 2003 further enhanced our administrative responsiveness to applications.

In March 2005, we capitalized on the advantages of the KIPOnet system by introducing an innovative work-at-home system for our examiners, and we initiated 24-7 services for filing, examinations, and various administrative procedures. To meet the security challenges created by these innovations, we established the Security Patrol Center.

In June 2006, we incorporated digital rights management into the KIPOnet system to protect undisclosed patent documents. This action was taken in response to the challenges of the work-at-home examination program and as a means of reducing the first action pendency period of examinations.

In December 2006, we became the first government agency in Korea to attain the ISO 20000 and ISO 27001 certificates. These certificates confirm the world-class status of our IT service management system and our information protection management system. Moreover, for our safe, convenient and high-quality KIPOnet services, we achieved a Level 4 grade in a Capability Maturity Model Integration assessment, an international standard for quality authentication.

In recognition of the growing importance of utilizing patent information, we have promoted the establishment of a system of analyzing patent statistics. Such a system could be used to determine the direction of national and commercial R&D. Plans are underway to establish a data warehouse exclusively for statistics, along with a statistical information system in 2007 and a strategic system of analyzing patent information in 2008.

We also combined, merged, or eliminated similar types of documents and simplified the unnecessarily complex parts of documents. As a result, we condensed 347 types of documents to just 157 types, making it more convenient for applicants to select and complete the necessary documents.

To share the results of examinations with other countries, we promoted the automatic translation of patent information and examination results, as well as the establishment of a network for sharing examination information with other countries. In addition, the Japan Patent Office and KIPO agreed to start exchanging examination results in April 2007, under the Korean-Japanese Patent Prosecution Highway project.

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Greater use of patent information



The search page of the KIPRIS Web site

To prevent the overlapping of R&D projects and to promote the development of new technologies, we have provided a basic database free of charge on the Internet <www.kipris.or.kr> since the year 2000. By the end of 2006, the service had provided around 55 million items of domestic and foreign IPR information; and each year users conduct around 13 million searches.

The demand for IP experts is increasing in business and academic spheres due to the twenty-first century's rapid shift towards a knowledge-based economy. Hence, since 2002, we have been running the Cyber International Patent Academy <www.ipacademy.net>. To date, we have developed 130 educational courses and, in 2006, more than 200,000 students benefited from these courses.

Statistics of the Cyber International Patent Academy

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of students	12,700	20,800	29,900	109,200	202,300
Number of courses	25	57	85	106	130

To help researchers utilize patent information more effectively, we conducted nationwide seminars in 2005 and 2006 on the strategic use of patent information. Furthermore, in 2006 we offered various types of support to the engineering departments of universities and graduate schools to promote the academic study of patents. Through these measures, we endeavored to systematically enhance the capability of researchers with regard to the utilization of patent information.

We also republished a manual on R&D patent strategy to foster a high performance R&D culture that leads to the acquisition of patents. The manual offers researchers and research institutes suggestions on essential patent management strategies and metrics pertaining to the R&D process. In addition, we run a dedicated Web site <www.ipr-guide.org> that provides on-line consultations on patent strategies and metrics.

In recent years, we have been publishing the Korean Patent Abstracts (KPA) in response to the growing trend of sharing examination and search results among countries. We published 182,465 abstracts in 2006 and, between 1997 and 2006, we published an accumulated total of 819,417 abstracts.

In 2006, we applied the eighth edition of the International Patent Classification to the KPA. Furthermore, because the KPA was adopted as part of the PCT minimum documentation for international searches and preliminary examinations, we reorganized the data, particularly the parts that were scattered, omitted, or improperly described in the 819,000 abstracts published before 2006. In 2007, we plan to edit another 136,000 items of data.

To promote the use of patent information, we compiled a database of domestic and international patent information. The international component contains 85 types of patent information from 24 foreign countries, including the USA, Japan, and various countries of Europe. By the end of 2006, the database contained 145.5 million items of domestic and international IPR data, which is an increase of 16.2 million items over the previous year.

KIPO's IPR database

(As of December 31, 2006; unit: million cases)

Classification	Type of data	Number of cases
Patents and utility models	Domestic	9.3
	International	111.0
Trademarks	Domestic	3.7
	Domestic	12.9
Industrial designs	International	8.6
	Total	145.5

We first began publishing IPR gazettes in booklet form in 1948. In 1998, we adopted a CD-ROM format, and, since July 2001, we have been publishing our gazettes on the Internet. The on-line gazettes, which cover the period between 1948 and 2006, feature 4.8 million IPR registrations.

Our Intellectual Property Digital Library contains patent documents from various countries. It has 29,000 books on patents, 524 periodicals, and the 144 documents that comprise the PCT minimum documentation. The following items are used for prior art searches in patent examinations: IEL, an academic database on electricity and electronics; Science Direct, an electronic journal; ACS; OSA; Japanese journals such as the JJAP and BCSJ; North Korean journals; Westlaw, a legal database; and Delphion, a database of patent documents.

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International leadership in automated patent administration

In May 2005, we used the Korea Funds-in-Trust at WIPO to develop, in conjunction with WIPO, the PCT receiving office administration software called PCT-ROAD. By the end of 2006, the software program had been distributed to twelve countries, including Vietnam, Singapore, and Israel.

In 2006, we collaborated with WIPO again in developing a digital IPR educational program called IP Panorama. IP Panorama uses animation to facilitate the learning of IPR concepts in ten fields, such as patent information, technology trade, M&As, e-commerce, and patent disputes. The program is useful for IP education and training, as well as the development of human resources.

In conjunction with the SMEs Division of WIPO, we developed e-learning IPR courses to help SMEs in developing countries create their own IP. We also made these courses available to companies and universities at home and abroad.

At the General Assembly of the PCT Union in October 2005, 128 member countries unanimously amended the PCT rules so that Korean patent documents would be incorporated into the PCT minimum documentation. That means that our patent documents must be accessible in any examination of international patents under the PCT. It also means that the IPRs of Korean companies operating overseas will have greater protection.

In line with new IPR regulations that take effect in April 2007, we are providing relevant databases to other patent offices so that examiners in those offices can conveniently search Korean patent documents during their examinations.

In 2006, we used our own resources, as well as funding worth 150,000 USD from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), to collect data from Korea and

other IPR leaders (the USA, Japan, Europe, and WIPO) on outstanding cases of patent information usage, and to develop the data into eight e-learning modules, called IP Xpedite. The modules were given to the member countries of APEC.

Cooperation with advanced countries in the IT field has produced mutual benefits, particularly the electronic exchange of information and data such as priority documents.

Our IT experts held a bilateral meeting with the Japan Patent Office (Daejeon, June 2006) and a trilateral meeting with China and Japan (Beijing, November 2006). Through these meetings, we strengthened IT exchanges, particularly with respect to the exchange of search data and the electronic exchange of priority documents.

We held three video conferences with the European Patent Office, in April, May, and September of 2006, to discuss the electronic exchange of priority documents and other information issues. One particular benefit of the conferences was the agreement to set up a Korean patent information helpdesk in January 2007 at the European Patent Office. The helpdesk will lay the foundation for promoting wider understanding of Korean patent information throughout Europe.

In October 2006, we held a bilateral meeting for IT experts with the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (Ottawa, June 2006) to discuss electronic exchange of priority documents and the exchange of other patent information.

Finally, to increase the international visibility of KIPOnet and Korean patent information, we undertook the following measures: we held an international patent information conference called PATINEX (Seoul, November 2006); we participated in the Canadian Government Procurement Exhibition (Ottawa, November 2006); and we applied for the UN Public Service Awards (December 2006).



The APEC e-learning modules of IP Xpedite



Bilateral IT meeting between KIPO and the Japan Patent Office



PATINEX in Seoul, November 2006