

Patent and Trademark Depository Library (PTDL) Program

For many decades, the Patent and Trademark Depository Library Program has done an admirable job of educating the public on patent and trademark resources and search tools and in communicating important information regarding USPTO initiatives. In the early years, much effort was devoted toward distributing print and later CDs containing patent and trademark documents. Over the past decade, the technology landscape has shifted profoundly with the availability of a number of free patent databases on the Internet. The USPTO website features a number of search tools and resources and the PTDL's now provide access to examiner search tools like PubWEST. The PTDL program emphasis has shifted from providing patent and trademark information in print or CD formats, to focusing on outreach and training. Here are some potential new or expanded directions for the PTDL program, which build on services that have been traditionally provided:

- **Virtual training** - Using webinars and other virtual training can magnify the impact of the PTDL training efforts. While personal visits to individual PTDLs can be an excellent way to connect with librarians and their clientele in the field, it is not a scalable model for a nationwide training network. Virtual classroom technology at PTO headquarters will allow PTDL program staff to provide web-based training on an ongoing basis. The training sessions could also be recorded and posted to the USPTO website for consultation by those unable to attend the training session. Prior to the training, the PTDLs in the target region would be provided with information kits containing information that would help them market the event to their community, as well as training handouts. An ongoing virtual training program will greatly multiply the impact of the PTDL program.
- **Train the Trainer** - The PTDL program has relied on an annual training seminar at USPTO as a primary method of training librarians in PTDL libraries. Some consideration might be given to also providing this training in conjunction with the American Library Association and SLA annual conferences. This might enable training of additional staff from PTDLs.
- **A Nationwide Network of Potential Spokespeople** - The USPTO is extremely fortunate to have a nationwide group of informed and interested representatives--the librarians in the PTDLs. In the past, the librarians have served as an important outreach group for various agency projects. We briefed this group and recruited their assistance in developing the search templates available through the USPTO website, just as one example. The PTDL program provides the agency with local spokespeople who can do much to communicate the mission, strategic directions and achievements of the agency in local areas. With appropriate resources, the PTDL office could provide updates on agency developments on an ongoing basis. While the USPTO website would be the primary method of disseminating this information, it is also good to communicate using the "human touch" provided by a group of 85 libraries.

- **A Focus for Outreach Efforts** - The PTDL Program can also serve as a focus for outreach to various groups in the patent and trademark community like PIUG (Patent Information Users Group) and AIPLA (American Intellectual Property Law Association). Other potential areas for outreach would be patenting offices at research universities, engineering and legal programs at universities (increasing knowledge of USPTO among potential employees). Additional outreach activities could include the Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization and other small business and inventors' groups.

Change in program emphasis should be accompanied by a change in the branding of the program. As the depository aspect of the program is reduced in importance, the program could be rebranded at the Patent and Trademark Library Program. It may also be useful to engage with the US Government Printing Office, whose network of depository libraries has gone through a similar transition as that faced by the PTDLs. The staff of the USPTO's Scientific and Technical Information Center (STIC) could also provide information and perspectives on virtual training and patents searching.

Developments in virtual training and internet search capabilities make this an exciting time for the PTDL program to move into a more visible and vital role in the patent and trademark community.

Submitted by:

Kristin M. Vajs

Chief Librarian, Federal Reserve Board of Governors

Formerly Director, Scientific & Technical Information Center, USPTO (1999-2008)