Improvement of IP administration

- Greater efficiency in examinations and trials
- Enhanced automation of IP administration

Improvement of IP administration

Greater efficiency in examinations and trials

The fastest examinations and trials in the world

Ceremony to mark the attainment of the world's fastest examination and trial service

In 2007, the pendency period remained at a steady 10 months for patents and utility models and six months for trademarks and industrial designs, reflecting a sound, firmly established examination plan and improved examination efficiency.

We improved the examination efficiency by refining the examination process through Six Sigma management, by introducing at-home examinations, and by making other improvements.

In addition, we reinforced the infrastructure for swift examinations by improving the efficiency of out-sourced projects, reducing the time needed to classify products, and specifying the units of design products in terms of the type of design.

Deviations in the pendency period were stabilized through a process of forecasting the examination demands for each technological field, product, and design; and through flexible allocation of examiners. The deviation range for the pendency period was plus or minus three months for patents and utility models and plus or minus two months for trademarks and industrial designs.

By using divisions that focus on key performance indicators, we have gradually achieved our goal of reducing the processing period for intermediate documents (such as arguments and complementary documents). We have also launched a quarterly monitoring system. The maximum processing period for intermediate documents is four months for patents and utility models and three months for trademarks and industrial designs.

The pendency period for trials was reduced to six months as a result of staff increases and improvements to trial procedures. We are now planning to increase the size of the trial staff by adding 11 new members (including four trial examiners). By adjusting the staff quota for examinations and trials, we expect to secure the required staff.

In other developments, we now use the intensive trial system for all inter partes trials and we have imposed limitations on unnecessary extensions to the period for submitting replies. We have also introduced a system of giving notification of the expected completion date of oral hearings.

By improving the efficiency of examinations and by practicing performance-oriented management, we have attained our goal of reducing the pendency period for examinations and trials. The pendency period is 9.8 months for patents and utility models, 5.7 months for trademarks, and 5.5 months for industrial designs. With regard to trials, the pendency period is 5.9 months for patents, utility models, trademarks and industrial designs.

Improvement in the quality of examinations and trials

To improve the quality and efficiency of examinations, we have made many improvements to our examination systems.

For examination tasks, we developed a management card system that features work transition cards and examination know-how lists. This system enables examiners to share their know-how. The launch of a similar management card system for the work history of each examiner has enabled us to gain a better understanding of the overall work performance and to reinforce the responsibility of examiners.

For patent and utility model applications, we introduced a positive examination system (for each claim). This system requires examiners to record whether a claim is presented properly, whether there are any grounds for refusal, whether there are any outstanding matters that need to be resolved, and the steps that must be taken to ensure the claim is eligible for registration.

By increasing the scope of consultations for examiners of complex technologies, we have created a new form of consultation-based examinations. In addition, to improve the quality of our PCT reports, we are planning to require new PCT examiners to work together with senior examiners for six months.

In 2007, we produced a manual on prior art searches and reinforced the evaluation standards of search reports. These measures have improved the overall quality of searches. Furthermore, our revision of prior art regulations has created competition among agencies that specialize in prior art searches and improved the proficiency of searchers.

Improvement of IP administration

Award ceremony for the best examiners

To help with the development and integration of technologies, we provide our staff with specialized in-house education. We have reinforced education on practical matters for new examiners and established a refresher course for former examiners. Our efforts to develop such professional educational systems for each level and to provide practical education have enhanced the expertise of our examiners.

We are continually upgrading our examination system and databases to improve the quality of our trademark and design examinations. In 2007, our focus was on the following:

- Establishing an online system of examination cooperation that enables new examiners to receive swift consultations from experienced examiners, with a resultant improvement in accuracy

- Organizing our vast database on trademark precedents according to the grounds of refusal so that examiners can conveniently find and apply related precedents for each examination

- Operating an intelligent search system that helps examiners swiftly and accurately search for identical (or similar) designs.

To improve the quality of our design examinations, we concentrated on improving the efficiency and accuracy of searching prior designs by reorganizing our data on more than 6.8 million designs; in particular, we subdivided products with excessive examination data according to the form of the design.

We also concentrated on raising the competitiveness of the design industry by developing design maps, which are used to analyze and process design data such as trends in design applications and design disputes. Design maps can be used by anyone to formulate design strategies, understand niche markets, set the direction of design during product development, and prevent unnecessary disputes.

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

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.

The oral hearing system

We evaluate excerpts of completed examinations for the purpose of improving the quality of our examinations. In addition, we organize the examination evaluations by type so that the information is readily accessible as feedback. To minimize errors in examinations, we give presentations on case studies and we run an educational program at our training institute to help examiners learn from outstanding as well as defective examinations.

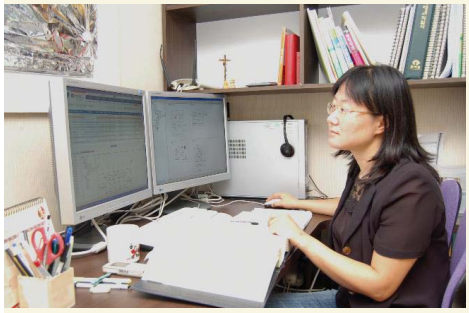
Examiners who achieve an outstanding examination performance are awarded the status of Best Examiner and are exempted from further examination evaluations. In contrast, examiners who regularly produce examination errors are given practical education on examination affairs.

The results of examination evaluations are directly reflected in the performance rating of each examiner and each group of examiners. The performance rating is used for promotion purposes, and only examiners and examination groups with an outstanding examination performance are rewarded.

KIPO has also taken steps to improve the quality of trials and appeals.

To enhance the proficiency of judges, as well as the quality of trials, we provide substantial educational opportunities for new judges as well as in-service training for experienced judges.

Improvement of IP administration



An examiner working at home

Furthermore, to help new judges adapt swiftly to trials, we introduced a mentoring system and extended the adaptation period of new judges from two months to three months.

Each quarter a quality assessment committee for each field analyzes the judgments and decisions on the cancellation of rights so that we can evaluate ways of improving the quality of judgments.

We have also established a database of precedents for each issue and enhanced the search system of the database to improve the accuracy of judgments.

The oral hearing system has been actively used. This system gives the parties of a trial more opportunity to state their opinions and it enables the points at issue to be organized more accurately.

Enhanced automation of IP administration

Advancement of the KIPOnet system

After introducing online 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, such as the disclosure of patent documents and the leakage of personal information, we upgraded our security system by introducing anti-intrusion systems, USB memory security, and other security measures.

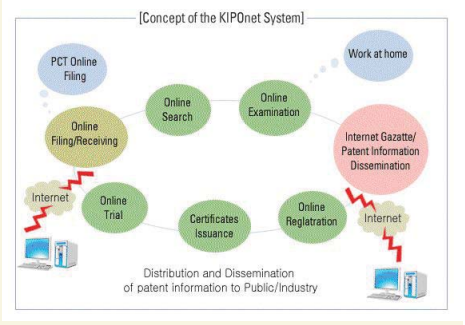
In January 2007, KIPO became the first government agency in Korea to attain the ISO 20000 and ISO 27001 certificates. These certificates confirm the world-class status of our IT service management system and our information protection management systems. These systems are routinely inspected twice a year so that we can continually improve the quality of the KIPOnet system.

Presentation ceremony for the ISO 20000 and ISO 27001 certificates

We established an integrated performance management system to cope with the expansion of networks and implemented a plan to move our major computer equipment to the Integrated Governmental Computer Center. The integrated performance management system is used to manage all our IT services, including hardware, networks, databases, and programs.

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. In 2007, we established a data warehouse exclusively for statistics and we implemented a new statistical information system. In 2008, we plan to take further steps to develop a strategic system of analyzing patent information.

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. Furthermore, in April 2007 we began to exchange examination results with the Japan Patent Office under a project called the Korea-Japan Patent Prosecution Highway.

Improvement of IP administration

Greater use of patent information

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 2007, the service had provided domestic and international IPR information on around 63 million items. Each year users conduct around 16 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 148 educational courses. In 2007, more than 220,000 students benefited from these courses.

Statistics of the Cyber International Patent Academy

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of students	12,700	20,800	29,900	109,200	202,300	**224,142**
Number of courses	25	57	85	106	130	**599,100**

To help researchers utilize patent information more effectively, we conducted nationwide seminars in 2007 on the strategic use of patent information. Furthermore, in 2007 we offered various types of support to the engineering departments of universities and graduate schools to promote the academic study of patents. Though this means, 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 online consultations on patent strategies and metrics.

Since April 2007, Korean patent documents have been included in the PCT minimum documentation. Accordingly, we have been providing copies of the Korean Patent Abstracts to other International Search Authorities so that they have access to Korean patent documents. This initiative corresponds to the growing trend of sharing examination and search results among countries. We published 342,804 abstracts in 2007. Between 1997 and 2006, we published an accumulated total of 1,162,221 abstracts.

In 2007, the scope of publication was extended to include 166,091 abstracts of foreign PCT disclosed patents. We also published a manual on writing English abstracts of Korean patents. The manual is designed to improve the writing skills of examiners and to help them systematically organize their ideas. In short, we are continually striving to improve the quality of the Korean Patent Abstracts.

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 26 foreign countries, including the USA, Japan and various countries in Europe. By the end of 2007, the database contained domestic and international IPR data on 159,044 items, which is an increase of 13,533 items over the previous year.

IPR database of IP offices

(As of December 31, 2007; unit: million cases)

Classification	Type of data	Number of cases
Patents and utility models	Domestic	10,285
	International	117,323
Trademarks	Domestic	4,853
Industrial designs	Domestic	17,104
	International	9,479
Total		159,044

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 online gazettes, which cover the period between 1948 and 2007, feature 4,861,630 IPR registrations.

Our Intellectual Property Digital Library contains patent documents from various countries. It has 29,000 books on patents, 532 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; Science; Nature; Wiley InterScience; Springer e-Journal; Westlaw, a legal database; and Delphion, a database of patent documents.

Improvement of IP administration

International leadership in automated patent administration

The home page of the IP Academy

In September 2004, KIPO introduced the world's first electronic exchange of PCT priority certificate documents, the purpose of which was to promote the international standardization of KIPOnet and to offer convenient services to applicants. Since 2005 the electronic exchange of documents has been expanded to include application documents, translation documents, and so on.

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 2007, the software program had been distributed to 18 countries, including Israel, Egypt, India, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Africa, and Mexico.

IP Panorama

In 2007, 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.

In line with IPR regulations that took 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 and 2007, with 260,000 USD worth of support from APEC, we developed an IP e-learning program called IP Xpedite and we have distributed the program to many countries around the world.

IP Xpedite is composed of 14 modules: eight of the modules, which were created in 2006, pertain to the use of patent information; the other six modules, which were developed in 2007, pertain to the preparation and interpretation of the patent documents required in major IP countries.

We are currently collaborating with major IP countries in the field of computerization, particularly in terms of the exchange of patent information and data, the establishment of a system for disclosing examination information, and the electronic exchange of priority documents.

Our IT experts held a bilateral meeting with the Japan Patent Office (Tokyo, June 2006) and a trilateral meeting with China and Japan (Tokyo, 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.

At the IT Experts Meeting with the European Patent Office in August, we discussed, in addition to the matters just mentioned, the dispatch of Korean patent information experts. In January 2007, we also set up a Korean Patent Information Helpdesk at the European Patent Office. The helpdesk is promoting a wider understanding of Korean patent information throughout Europe. Our electronic exchange of priority documents started in July 2007.

To promote KIPOnet and Korean patent information throughout the world, we held an international patent information conference at Seoul in October 2007. We also participated in the Seventh Government Innovation Forum (Vienna Austria, July 2007), the General Assembly of the United Cities and Local Government (October 2007), a meeting of the US Patent Information User Group, a conference of the US Special Librarian Association, and a conference of the European Patent Office on patent information.

PATINEX in Seoul, October 2007