

UNITED STATES
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE



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Richard Seidel

Deputy Commissioner for Patents

Searching Foreign Prior Art at the USPTO

Patent Examiner Access



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Foundations of examiner search

- Examiners' ability to locate the best available prior art at the earliest time in the examination process is paramount to optimizing patent application pendency and issuing high quality patents, key goals of the USPTO's Strategic Plan
- Patent examination, though inherently complex, is in large part a fact-finding mission with the goal of providing predictable and reliable intellectual property rights



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Legacy examiner search systems

- Legacy systems EAST and WEST search tools include the following data:
 - U.S. patents
 - Pre-grant publications
 - U.S. design patents
- Current access to foreign prior art is limited in these systems, as it does not include any foreign design prior art



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Legacy search and retrieval options

Search and Retrieval Options ×

Databases to search:

☐ US-PGPUB
☒ USPAT
☒ USOCR
☐ FPRS
☐ EPO
☐ JPO
☐ DERWENT
☐ IBM_TDB

☒ Prior Art Search
☐ Interference Search

Select All Clear All

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Examiner access to foreign prior art in legacy systems

| Database | Text | Image | Approximate Number of Documents | Data Access |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Derwent World Patents Index | Current through February 15, 2021 for Derwent WPI Text Data | Current through February 15, 2021 for Derwent WPI Image Data | 47M | Stored |
| Chinese Patent Office Abstracts in FPRS (Foreign Patent Retrieval Service Abstracts Database) | Legacy system contains approximately 28M documents in FPRS – only abstracts and metadata | No drawings | 28M | Stored |
| Japanese Patent Office Abstracts Database | Jan 6, 1975 to Mar 31, 2020 for publication dates of JPO Abstract Text Data | Jan 6, 1975 to Jan 29, 2021 for publication dates of JPO Image Data | 11.5M | Stored |
| European Patent Office Abstracts Database | Jan 1, 1901 to Feb 7, 2019 for publication dates of Foreign Patent Abstract Text Data | Jan 13, 1978 to Nov 30, 2020 for publication dates of EPO Image Data | 3.6M | Stored |

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Title search: Searching Foreign Prior Art at the USPTO Patent Examiner Access

Also available as part of the eCourse

[China Patent Update: Prior Art Explosion, Filing and Prosecution Issues](#)

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16th Annual Advanced Patent Law Institute session

"China Patent Update: Prior Art Explosion, Rapid Evolution of the CNIPA and Courts, and Filing and Prosecution Issues"