

PATENTS ABOUT PATENTS

Searching, validating, drafting, challenging, or evaluating: Somebody owns an idea on how to do it.

Patents can be self referencing. There are patents, for example, for technology which supposedly helps engineers invent. Imagine using patented technology to invent something you then patent. And, there are many other patents concerning other aspects of the patenting process. Here's a sampling.

Patents are searched to evaluate the patentability of an engineer's invention and also to challenge the validity of someone else's patent. There are a lot of patent-searching patents. One example is patent application No. 2012/0016859 by Christopher Nordby Sears of Annapolis, Md., for an automated method of searching for "prior art" patents which can be used by engineers in drafting invention disclosures.

A close cousin to searching is the idea of a patent bounty. When faced with a patent one doesn't like, the engineering and science community is enlisted to help knock the patent out. These "bounty hunters" win money if their searching efforts assist in voiding the troublesome patent. The abstract of the IP.com Inc. patent application No. 2002/0107709 reads as follows:

A method and apparatus for collecting and communicating information related to validity of a patent over a global information network, including the steps of soliciting bounty hunters via a global information network for prior art related to validity of the patent, receiving substantive information related to the validity of the patent from at least one of the bounty hunters in response to the solicitation, sanitizing the substantive information to remove indicia of source, and submitting sanitized substantive information to a bounty offeror.

Drafting a patent application involves

an understanding of engineering and science, technical writing know-how, some skill in art (for the drawings), a lot legal knowledge and experience, and to a certain extent, the ability to tell a compelling story. Can it be automated? Patent No. 5,754,840 by Smart Patents Inc. describes a computer program that assists the drafter in editing a patent application to achieve "terminology consistency." Many other patents promise similar aids to help with various aspects of patent drafting.

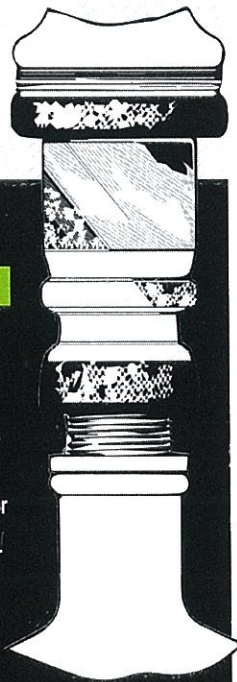
Once the patent application is drafted, it is filed with various patent offices worldwide, each of which has its own unique rules. Patent application No. 2012/0173442 describes an IP prosecution management system which helps attorneys navigate and manage multiple country filings.

Some patents are worth quite a bit; some not so much. Assessing a given patent's worth is a little bit like the valuation of a potential mate. Patent No. 6,556,992 is for a computerized method of rating a patent based on its breadth, defensibility, and commercial relevance.

Patent litigation can quickly get out of hand. Among the numerous litigation support tool patents is No. 7,197,716 titled "Litigation Management System and Method," owned by Merchant & Gould P.C. in Minneapolis—a well known patent firm.

So, we could supposedly use patented technology to rate this patent to see if it's valid. We could even use the patent itself to manage a court case involving it. Each Escher hand draws the other. **ME**

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THE SCHRADER VALVE

QUICK FACTS

U.S. Patent // No. 495,064

Issued // April 11, 1893

Inventor // George H.F. Schrader

Current applications // Automobile tires, refrigeration and air conditioning charging systems, SCUBA gear, aircraft hydraulic systems.

Description // "This invention relates most particularly to air valves of the class wherein a positive closure is made by screwing the valve against the seat, and the invention aims to provide an improved valve of this character which can be tightly closed when desired, and positively and completely opened by ordinary manipulation."

Original manufacturer // The Schrader Co.