

Zeitschrift: Arbido
Herausgeber: Verein Schweizerischer Archivarinnen und Archivare; Bibliothek Information Schweiz
Band: 18 (2003)
Heft: 1-2

Artikel: "Manage your progress" - the IGE's new search products to assist corporate strategic decision-making
Autor: Ledergerber, Walter
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-769881>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 13.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

«Manage Your Progress» – the IGE's new search products to assist corporate strategic decision-making

■ **Walter Ledergerber**
 Swiss Federal Institute
 of Intellectual Property (IGE),
 Berne



The Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property, known throughout Switzerland as the IGE, is Switzerland's correlate to a national authority for matters pertaining to intellectual property law with one fairly major difference: it is financially independent of the federal budget, which means that it operates according to free-market principles. For this reason, it does not see itself as an administrative agency but as a competence centre for intellectual property with the function of stimulating local enterprises by encouraging innovation at all stages of the development process, including the exploitation of patents.

The IGE patent division is particularly innovative and user-focused. In response to the problems posed by the dwindling number of national patent applications (there are now only about 2,500 a year) and the staffing problems caused by the need for examiners to be not only specialised but fluent in one of three national languages, we set up a team including 2–3 full-time equivalent posts in 1999 with the remit to develop new services. The goal was to create structured foundations for corporate strategic decision-making processes, and, after three years of development, that has become a reality.

During the product development phase, three basic guidelines were always kept in the forefront:

1. *Knowledge, not information*
2. *Integration of IP into the corporate business context*
3. *Complementary partners instead of just regional offices*

Knowledge instead of information

Patent professionals have known how to get information from data for a long time,

and, since the advent of the Internet, the rest of the world does too. With 40 million patents accessible online, that is no mean feat. However, even with a very complex prior art search, that data is still just information. For example, some suppliers just return a pile of patent specifications to their customers. In order to make that information into knowledge, the directly deducible benefit to the customer, in his specific environment, must be identified.

Three types of specialised knowledge are needed to achieve this, namely technical and scientific knowledge, knowledge of possible corporate strategies, and knowledge of patent searching. Only this combination enables data to be analysed and information assessed.

Integration into the business context

Enterprises have processes, although they are not always transparent. Responsible for the processes are people needs vary depending on the process under their supervision. Although this is a platitude for some, it must be borne in mind that a prior art search can be useful at completely different points in a process. An R&D manager would certainly find this true; management at the business end might be more interested simply in the end of the process, the exploitation of an innovation, i.e., products, turnover and licences.

The IGE has now developed a series of module search packets which can be adapted to various individual processes and to the needs of the people responsible for those processes. Rather than having customers come, preferably in person, to simply get information about patents, the Institute has re-positioned itself to be an external partner which solves specific problems.

The search service packets are modular in order to be both transparent and possible to produce. There are some 20 modules which can be combined in any way to form a search packet thus offering extraordinarily flexibility to the customer and a large degree of automation for the IGE.

Why complementary partnerships?

For the IGE, a partnership is not calling in an expert – even if the privilege is paid for. That is simply buying a service. Nor is it brokering services on preferential terms. That is co-operating but not complementing. A complementary partnership is when people with differing – perhaps for political or legal reasons – competencies offer services together which neither of the two could have offered on their own. In this kind of relationship, one and one makes more than two.

Take for instance the licensing process. A customer usually wants answers to questions such as, is it even worth licensing an invention? Who would be interested? What is the potential of a licensee? For such a job, the suitable partner would be a licensing consultant firm which would specify the questions; the IGE would then supply the technological benchmark figures, and then the partner would consider what step to take next with the customer.

With the patents and products databases maintained by the IGE, a list of enterprises which might be interested in the invention in question is drawn up. Then initial, exploratory contact with possible licensees is made via the partner firm. Once a shortlist is created, the IGE carefully assesses the R&D activities of the firms and their innovation potential. The licensing partner then brings this store of knowledge to the negotiations. Such partnerships guarantee the best possible quality at every stage of the institute's customer support.

In order to better identify the appropriate search service modules for a client, the institute has prepared a matrix which shows seven possible problem areas on one axis and the various customer concerns on the other. For instance, it includes patentability, infringement of property rights, research and development, and competitor intelligence. It also naturally includes problems involved in the search for partners, whether for co-operation, licensing or funding.

As an example of what the search packets deliver, the packet "Technology Trend Analysis" provides an overview of developments in a specific field of technology. This

includes a prior art search for the previous ten years, and in some cases an extrapolation, to reveal substitution methods and development technologies. At the same time, the eight major trendsetters (i.e. enterprises) in the field of technology under review are evaluated and their innovation potential established. Once these steps are completed, the client's enterprise is positioned to complete the picture. This provides an excellent basis for making strategic decisions concerning niche policies, me-too strategies or a freeze on capital expenditure, for example, even without detailed analyses.

Another interesting packet is the "Portfolio Assessment", which provides competitor intelligence. It involves carefully examining not only the patent portfolio but a company's whole strategy for industrial property rights, which reveal both geographical factors and the development focuses of the R&D departments. A comparison with the state of the art enables the individual technologies in the competitor's portfolio to be evaluated. If these are entered into a life-cycle matrix, the enterprises' future activities in this field of technology can also be predicted. Such detailed

information is useful to those working in R&D and to investors.

A controversial, universally debated subject is the matter of technology assessment in respect to non-monetary valuations of an innovation. In order to assess the potential of an invention, the technology itself must first be looked at and, in particular, the market and the potential of the enterprises concerned. It is clear that the combination of technological trend, competitor positioning and the assessment of the enterprise's own innovation potential enables the prospects of an invention's success to be evaluated better than previously, at least in terms of its "technology." These information garnered from such searches must, of course, continue to be embedded in market analyses and corporate strategy by management.

These innovative search module packets have been possible in Switzerland because of its size making it able to combine the national industrial property rights authority with the regional centres. The IGE's commercially autonomous legal status also enables it to engage in rapid, independent developments, even if these are expensive and labour-intensive. Other offices are not generally in the same position.

The services offered by the Institute require a broad spectrum of technical competence which some of the regional contact points do not have. Only an examining authority can – indeed must – be able to cover all technical fields. For instance, the Institute employs specialists in organic, inorganic and materials chemistry just in the field of chemistry itself. There are also specialists in pharmaceuticals, two biotechnologists, one biochemist and one food specialist. Having made a virtue out of necessity, the IGE can offer every customer his or her own specialised contact person. Perhaps that is a typically Swiss combination.

Interested in more information? Please visit our new website www.exensis.ch or call us at +41 (0)31 325 25 25. ■

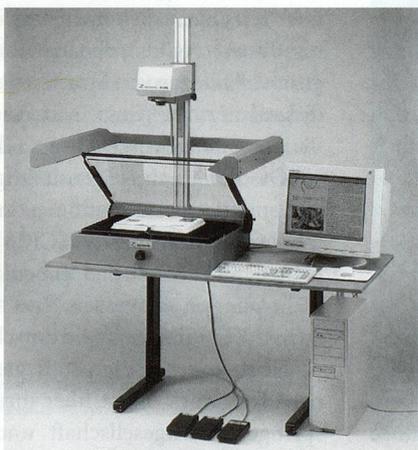
contact:

Walter Ledergerber
Swiss Federal Institute
of Intellectual Property
Einsteinstrasse 2
3003 Bern
Tel.: 031 322 49 82
E-Mail: walter.ledergerber@ipi.ch
Internet: <http://www.ige.ch>

Anzeigen

|r|f|s| art of microfilm magic scanning

Das elektronische Kopieren kostbarer Kulturgüter mit dem Tischbuchscanner **OS 5000 TT** erfolgt materialschonend und ohne Belastung des Buchrückens.



Vorlagen bis A2 lassen sich mit 2, 16 oder 256 echten Graustufen mit bis zu 600 dpi ablichten. Sehr hohe Schärfentiefe, maximale Bedienerfreundlichkeit und flexibler Einsatz weisen den OS 5000 TT als praxisgerechtes Spitzenprodukt aus.

/r/f/s/ Mikrofilm AG
Hinterbergstrasse 15
6300 Cham

Tel: 041 741 66 77
Fax: 041 741 30 48
Email: rfs@frik.ch
Internet: www.frik.ch

Sie planen die neue Bibliothek – Ihre Liebe gilt den Medien

Unser Fach ist die Einrichtung,
basierend auf langjähriger Erfahrung und
grosser Auswahl.

Wir beraten Sie fachmännisch und setzen
Ihre Wünsche um.

Kennen Sie unsere Checkliste?



ERBA AG, Bibliothekseinrichtungen
Bahnhofstrasse 33, 8703 Erlenbach
Tel. 01 912 00 70, Fax 01 911 04 96
E-Mail: info@erba-ag.ch

4846_2201