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Tools for the valorization, diffusion and fruition of patent information resources

by Domenico Lucarella ()*

Full Paper

Since it was established in 1998, the PATLIB Centre of the University of Lecce has represented an essential point of reference for students and academics of this university, as well as for local entrepreneurial associations and SME's.

Through the use of innovative technological and computer systems, the Centre, which is managed by the SIBA Coordination of the University of Lecce, has been taking form as a cutting edge structure for the diffusion of patent information and the promotion and development of technological innovation.

The Centre includes laboratories and highly technological computerized and data processing facilities for the on-line management and consultation of the national and international patent documentation and the supplying of information services in the territory, differentiated for each type of users. It has technical and scientific staff highly qualified in various disciplines to support training activities, assistance, monitoring and planning of programmes for research and technological development.

In particular, the Centre has a Laboratory for the acquisition and the electronic processing of information, a Reading Room, located at the central offices of the SIBA Coordination (Edifice "La Stecca"), three data processing Laboratories, located at the SIBA Telematic Information Poles, and a Technological Enquiry Desk, located at the "Ecotekne" Centre of the University of Lecce.

The main laboratory, accessible only to specific and highly qualified staff and university researchers, is equipped with:

- A *rack-mounted* server based on a *thin-client* technology, with a Citrix MetaFrame operating system and Tatoon software for the downloading and on-line management of CD-ROMs. Through this system the CD-ROMs of the main national, European and international patent databases are accessible on-line from Windows, MacOs and Unix platforms. These databases, in

comparison with those on-line, including Esp@cenet, enable a higher speed of enquiry and information retrieval.

- A Web server providing easy access from whatever local or remote workstation to the services of the PATLIB Centre of the University of Lecce and to patent information available on-line or on CD-ROM.
- A workstation for the design, the development, the processing and the check-out of specific RTD projects.
- Personal Computers, scanners, laser and inkjet printers.

The Centre, moreover, can make use of the most advanced technological equipment of the SIBA Coordination Laboratories: scanner, digitizer and plotter for the acquisition and printing of large format (A0); high resolution digital back and 3D laser scanner for the acquisition of documents, images, objects and environments; software for digital image processing and for three-dimensional modelling and processing.

The Reading Room is equipped with Personal Computers connected to the university network and has scanners and printers for the consultation, processing and printing of patent information. It is open to the public every day from Monday to Friday. In this Room, just as in the data processing Laboratories, users can access autonomously the patent information available on-line and on CD-ROM. The website of the PATLIB Centre, accessible at <http://siba2.unile.it/patlib>, features local information resources and links to the major free and charged information sources. The users, moreover, guided by the persons in charge, can tackle particularly complex and specific searches, consult password protected databases accessible on-line, and process, store and print the results of their own searches. They can constantly take advantage, also individually, of the on-site and on-line advice by the persons in charge and of the training they provide.

The Technological Enquiry Desk, set up through an agreement with the Industrial Association of the Province of Lecce, named ILO (Industrial Liaison Office), provides SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) with information services and assistance to inventions development, to prototype achievement, to the design of RTD programmes and to accessing public and private financial sources available for research.

ILO promotes innovation, encourages cooperation and technological transfer from universities and research centres into enterprises, supplying technical-scientific and operational support, and provides assistance to entrepreneurs during the entire process of technological development of the enterprise.

Vocational training is one of the main objectives of the PATLIB Centre of the University of Lecce. This training involves in loco and remote seminars, interactive courses and lessons by means of modern computer technologies. It addresses staff and users of the PATLIB Centres, students and research workers, universities and SMEs. It aims at the diffusion of patent information, at the innovation and development of intellectual property in all European countries, as well as at the creation of highly qualified professional profiles in the field of industrial research, innovation and technological transfer.

In line with its objectives, the PATLIB Centre of the University of Lecce has carried out various training activities at a local and national level.

These training activities address first of all the staff of the PATLIB Centre itself, being the strategic factor for the organization of services, as well as the diffusion of knowledge within the field of intellectual property.

Training and updating courses on modern computer technologies have been organized. In particular, courses and seminars have been held on management and diffusion systems of on-line and CD-ROM databases, on Web-based management and consultation systems of electronic publications, on industrial property, on international patent classification and on patent databases accessible on-line and on CD-ROM.

These activities, open also to the staff of other PATLIB Centres, enable the acquisition and the enhancement of specialized competence, which are of primary importance for service development in favour of the users and for the promotion and diffusion of the patent know-how in the academic and entrepreneurial milieu.

A "Regulation on the Lecce University inventions" has been approved and a Technical Patent Committee has been established, aiming to promote and schedule research within the University, also in connection with enterprises and external institutions, and favouring the patenting and valorization of research results.

The training activities scheduled by the PATLIB Centre of the University of Lecce, thus, have been addressed also to the wider group of users aiming at the creation of highly qualified professional profiles in the field of industrial research, innovation and technological transfer.

A great number of training and updating courses and seminars have been held, attended by a diversified range of users: entrepreneurs, university teaching staff, research workers and students from all over Italy.

In collaboration with the Italian Patent and Trademark Office of the Ministry of Industries, the Institute "Guglielmo Tagliacarne" and other institutions, the master "INSPRINT" has been organized, a formative course aiming at the creation of "Experts in Industrial Property for Innovation", co-financed by the Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR).

All the training activities have been held through a direct approach to the teaching staff and through the use of hardware and software technologies, that is through a pragmatic approach and a mix of personal as well as technology mediated relationships.

The need for a wider spread of patent information and of continuing vocational training, fitting better to our modern cognitive society, has determined the development of more and more technologically advanced services.

The PATLIB Centre, and in particular the SIBA Coordination of the University of Lecce, has empowered the systems for the management and consultation of bibliographic and documentary databases and full-text electronic journals, all accessible via the Web, simultaneously and through one single search interface.

An audio-video registration room has been set up for the recording of teachers' lectures, and the existing Web-based publication and consultation system of didactic material has been developed.

The Web-based European Information System EEIS-PATLIB accessible at the URL <http://siba2.unile.it/eeis-patlib> has been further expanded, aiming at a more widespread patent information and at a continuing vocational updating at a European level.

Within the PATLIB Logo Competition a new PATLIB logo has been created and awarded by EPO. This logo will mark the European PATLIB Centres network and will contribute to the valorisation and diffusion of patent information, increasing the efficiency and visibility of the growing European network.

The development of patent activities of the University of Lecce and more generally of all the Italian universities has lately experienced a remarkable impulse.

A "Network for the valorisation of university research" has been established between 40 Italian universities, aiming at a cooperation to valorize and spread scientific research results obtained within the universities, to create the common best practices, to exchange information,

to define evaluation models for the innovative potential of patentable inventions and the valorization of research results in entrepreneurial environment.

Within this network, the achievement of an Italian university patent database has been planned. The goal of this database is to create a specific tool to know the fields covered by the patent activities of the various Italian universities and to know the registered or deposited patents. In this way, overlapping can be avoided and synergies could be stimulated on the one hand, while, on the other, knowledge can be facilitated as well as the spreading of university patents to potentially interested companies.

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() Domenico Lucarella*
Technical Responsible for the PATLIB Centre
SIBA Coordination
University of LECCE
Tel. +39 0832 297261-2; fax +39 0832 297261
e-mail: siba@siba2.unile.it; dlucarella@siba2.unile.it
<http://siba2.unile.it/patlib>