
Best of the Best Business Websites

The Best of the Best Business Websites Award was established in 2009 to recognize three websites relevant to information professionals providing business reference services. The websites are nominated and selected by the Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS) Education Committee members on the basis of their content quality, ease of use and technical execution. The winners are announced at the RUSA Book and Media Awards reception at the ALA Midwinter Meeting. You may view previous winners at www.ala.org/rusa/awards/bestofthebest. To access other BRASS-recommended resources, go to <http://brass.libguides.com>.

2015 BEST FREE BUSINESS WEBSITES WINNERS

Topic: Intellectual Property

Patent Lens: www.bios.net/daisy/patentlens/patentlens.html
(note: moving to “The Lens”: <https://www.lens.org/lens>)

Patent Lens bills itself as “a worldwide, open-access, free full-text patent informatics resource.” It was created by Cambia, a nonprofit institute that promotes change and innovation through creating new technologies, tools and paradigms. At the time of the writing of this review, *Patent Lens* was undergoing a name change to *The Lens*, and will soon be found only at <https://www.lens.org/lens>. The changes seem to be all positive as the new site increases the worldwide covered jurisdictions, allows for exploration of global patent families, provides multi-lingual searching, allows more extensive faceting filters, and allows for DNA and protein sequence patent searching. The information discussed below was searched on the original site.

The webpage itself is a simple design with a homepage and five additional top tabs with dropdown menus. The first tab “Home,” the Patent Lens homepage, provides a general web search at the top, and some limited information including highlights available on the site, selected articles about both the website and topics of interest to patent researchers, and details about searching for patents.

The second tab takes the user into the heart of the site. Titled “Patent Search and Tools,” it offers four dropdown choices: “Patent Search,” “Patent Search Help,” “Blast and Sequence Search” and “Patent Lens FAQs.” This section mirrors much of what is available on the homepage, but is a logical starting point and a more powerful search tool than the one available on the homepage, as the ability to narrow a search is immediately available. Clicking on the “Patent

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Search and Tools” tab, or the “Patent Search” dropdown tab both lead to the large search engine, which immediately performs a search for everything available in the database. From there it is easy to refine the search by keywords, and over a dozen different facets from “Dates” to “Document Families” to “Biologicals” are available for narrowing a search. These facets are easy to use and helpful—as an example the “Jurisdictions” refinement allows the searcher to include or exclude dozens of countries, from Japan with more than 22 million patents, to Uzbekistan with ten. The top one hundred companies are listed under “Applicants,” IPCR Classifications are used to narrow a search in “Classifications,” and “Query Tools” allows a search to be narrowed to only items with full text currently available. The “Patent Search Help” offers numerous tips and tricks for more efficient searching of the database.

The third dropdown selection, “Blast and Sequence Search,” was problematic and did not link properly to the new site. However, what was previously under this tab can now be found at the “PatSeq Finder” on the new site. This allows a researcher to use an input sequence to match or analyze similar sequences from the database; more than 213 million sequence listings have been extracted from various documents. The final dropdown tab, “Patent Lens FAQs,” offers a variety of information from why the site exists, to what it contains, to some ethical questions about patents and their use.

The third top tab, “Patent Landscapes,” has three dropdown choices. The first, “Explore Patent Landscapes,” offers many white papers on patent subjects in agriculture, the environment, health and medicine. The second, “Sequence Project (BLAST),” offers a clean link to the “PatSeq Finder” mentioned above. The third, “Patent Landscaped FAQs,” provides information on the patent landscapes, how they are chosen and what they provide.

The “Intellectual Property” tab provides a “Patent Tutorial and FAQs” tab, which is an excellent starting point for anyone just beginning patent research. The “IP Policies and Practices” tab presents discussions on many issues in patent and intellectual property policies, laws, and practices. And the “Patent Laws Around the World” tab breaks down the information into seven main geographical areas (i.e., “Asia” and “America—North and Central”) which link to a listing of countries in that area, many of which have articles and other information about intellectual property in those countries. However, not all countries listed include information.

The “Media Center” tab offers a variety of articles about Cambia, BiOS and Patent Lens, as well as press releases and video/audio content from the site, most of which is dated and will hopefully be updated when the new site is fully released.

This free website is appropriate for everyone interested in learning more about searching patents.—*Susan A. Schreiner, Access Services Librarian, Axe Library, Pittsburg State University (BRASS Education Committee Member, 2011–15)*

IntellectualPropertyBasics: www.cfe.umich.edu/intellectual-property

Intellectual property issues can challenge even the most seasoned entrepreneurs, and the legal implications for brash decisions can be extreme. Entrepreneurs who have created a product or service are often looking for resources to explain policies and procedures for intellectual property. Some resources focus too heavily on legal or academic business jargon, and may intimidate patrons. Intellectual Property Basics is a freely available series of short videos, designed by Law Professor Bryce Pilz at the University of Michigan, that highlight key concepts all entrepreneurs and start-ups should know about intellectual property. The videos cover over 60 topics, including patents, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets, and are designed for those with little or no experience with intellectual property. The videos are available on the University of Michigan’s website, as well as on YouTube.

The National Science Foundation, Michigan I-Corps, Zell Entrepreneurship and Law Clinic, and the Center of Entrepreneurship at the University of Michigan supported the development of this content and site. The videos are hosted on the MconneX platform. The development of the Intellectual Properties Basics video series and website was supported by the I-Corps Node Grant, which is designed to support innovation education, infrastructure and research.

The videos are narrated by Bryce Pilz, a Clinical Assistant Professor of Law in the Entrepreneurship Clinic at the University of Michigan. Pilz teaches in the Master of Entrepreneurship program. He previously worked at Kirkland and Ellis, specializing in intellectual property. He also served as the Associated General Counsel at the University of Michigan, working with the Office of Technology Transfer on startups and licensing agreements. Pilz brings a sense of humor to this often intimidating subject, and uses real life examples to help cement concepts. Most of the videos are filmed on the University of Michigan’s campus. For example, Pilz films the segment on “Works for Hire: Copyright Ownership” in the campus soccer stadium, while discussing a soccer-related example. The constant change of scenery and use of real-life examples keeps the videos exiting.

The short videos, each averaging three to five minutes, are arranged in five areas: an introduction, patents, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets. While the videos are organized in a series of subtopics, each video is designed to be comprehensive enough to be watched independently by an entrepreneur with a specific need. A hyperlinked outline will allow users to select the video that best fits their needs.

The introduction discusses the different types of intellectual property issues that may arise for startups and reviews the different categories of intellectual property. The second section provides an overview of the patent system, including the anatomy of a patent, what can be patented, how to obtain a patent, patent owner rights, design patents, patent infringement, and litigation. The third section covers

copyright, including what copyright protects, ownership, and avoiding infringement. The fourth section discusses trademarks, including obtaining trademark protection, clearing a company and product name and using trademarks that belong to others. The last section covers trade secrets, highlighting how to protect trade secrets and avoiding infringing on trade secrets of competitors and other third parties.

Pilz also offers a free “crash course” based on the videos. This is a four week course which includes live weekly Google hangout discussions with Pilz and guest experts. This allows participants to get immediate answers to questions, as well as engage in dialog with peers. The course is offered multiple times each year, and advertised on the Intellectual Property Basics Website. The four weeks each center on a theme: patenting an idea, beyond the patent, what infringes on someone else’s rights, and forming a company.

Because the videos are designed for an audience unfamiliar with the scope and legal issues related to intellectual property, they are appropriate for a wide range of audiences, including entrepreneurs, business students, and small business owners. The videos can be watched independently or incorporated into academic courses and workshops. The members of the BRASS Education Committee and I highly recommend incorporating this resource into reference transactions and instruction sessions that involve intellectual property rights.—*Kelly LaVoice, Business Research Librarian, Cornell University*

The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO): www.uspto.gov

Patent and trademark searches can contribute to many research activities: uncovering existing intellectual property, investigating a new field or market, tracking competition, learning how a product or technology works, and historical business analysis. The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) website allows one to search for pending and issued patents and trademarks and gain access to learning and educational materials. This resource is consistently recommended by academics, librarians, and legal professionals.

The USPTO website is produced by the United States Patent and Trademark Office—the federal agency charged with registering trademarks and issuing patents in accordance with objectives outlined in the United States Constitution. Its website states, this office acts “as a mechanism that protects new ideas and investments in innovation and creativity” and “is at the cutting edge of the nation’s technological progress and achievement.” Making patent and trademark information available to the public is one of its primary missions, along with advising government officials and agencies on intellectual property issues, protecting worldwide and trade-related aspects of intellectual property, and training and education.

Content on the site is well organized by section: Patents, Trademarks, and Learning and Resources. The patents

section provides information about patent basics as well as insight on the patent application process and how to maintain a patent once granted. The trademark section provides similar content to the patent section. Both include links to assist in filing, paying for, and tracking patent and trademark applications. Learning and Resources houses a mix of tools important for various audiences (exs. information about the Inventors Assistance Center for entrepreneurs or child-focused “Build an Invention” activities for educators), help and FAQs (e.g., “Do I need a patent, trademark, or copyright?”), and explanations of office-specific services and publications. The main page includes links to news, updates, and initiatives related to the USPTO. One can browse each individual content section, use a quick links feature, or keyword search across the entire site.

A few items housed in the Learning and Resources section are worth highlighting. First, patent and trademark data are available in bulk form and can be downloaded for research and analysis. Information about this data can be found under the “Electronic Data Products” link. Next, the “Classification” link provides an overview and several resources for the United States Patent Classification (USPC) and newer Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) systems. Using these classifications can assist in patent retrieval. CPC classification schema can also be searched using the site search text box on the website’s main page. Lastly, the “Researchers and Librarians” link outlines the nationwide network of public, state, and academic libraries designated as Patent and Trademark Resource Centers (PTRC). These centers house expertly trained staff and examiner-based search tools—PubEAST (Public Examiner’s Automated Search Tool) and PubWEST (Public web-based Examiner’s Search Tool)—for patent and trademark assistance.

Librarians will find the tools that allow for free searching of pending and issued United States patents and trademarks very useful. PatFT (Patent Full-text and Image Database), found under the “Quick Links,” provides access to patent information from 1790 to the present (content is added weekly). Patents from 1790 through 1975 are searchable only by issue date, patent number, and current USPC. Patents from 1976 through the present are searchable via full-text. Basic and advanced searches are possible. Fifty-five fields (exs. keyword, title, abstract, inventor name and city, government interest, references) along with Boolean capabilities can assist in building an effective search. Results are listed by patent number and title, and files house well-marked full-text and images. Help is available, along with a USPTO-recommended seven step initial search strategy (www.uspto.gov/learning-and-resources/support-centers/patent-and-trademark-resource-centers-ptrc/resources/seven). AppFT (Applications Full-Text and Image Database), also found under “Quick Links,” includes the images and full-text of all United States patent applications published since March 2001. TESS (Trademark Electronic Search System), also found under the “Quick Links,” provides access to text and images for more than

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three million pending, registered, and abandoned trademarks. Updates to TESS are frequent and displayed on the initial search screen. Many basic and advanced search options are available in TESS; new users should view the USPTO's "Conducting a Trademark Search" page (www.uspto.gov/learning-and-resources/support-centers/patent-and-trademark-resource-centers-ptrc/resources).

The United States Patent and Trademark Office website is a value resource for a variety of audiences including entrepreneurs, academics, engineers, and legal practitioners. It is highly recommended for all levels/all libraries.—*Christina Sheley, Head, Business/SPEA Information Commons, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*