

Information sources in patents: Stephen Adams.

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Information Sources in Patents

Stephen Adams

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663pp, hardback, £91 rrp, but available cheaper from Amazon

This heavyweight tome is a completely revised and updated edition of a well-established guide to patent information sources. It comprises 19 chapters plus numerous appendices and annexes, all written by one of the acknowledged experts in the field of patent searching. The chapters are organised into two parts, first, patent law and the patent systems of each of the major patent-issuing authorities in the world; and second, sources of patent and patent-relevant information and search techniques.

The chapters vary considerably in length, but all are characterised by the author's wealth of experience, with helpful comments about strengths and weaknesses of particular sources or search methods. The author is not afraid to criticise, such as his comments on the lack of accurate patent information from Italy on page 156. Equally, he is happy to praise, such as his comments on the old UK abridgements on page 175. The author writes in an accessible style, but the book would probably be quite a difficult read for someone who knows nothing about patents at all. The book is supported by an index, which though helpful, is not quite as comprehensive as I would have liked. Most chapters contain one or more lengthy Figures and Tables, summarising key facts about what is being discussed in the chapter. Nearly all the chapters have a list of references at the end, though now and again, these are to unpublished works, so cannot be followed up by the diligent reader.

I have a few minor criticisms about the book; sometimes, shorthand codes or abbreviations are introduced (such as in Table 1.2) without referring the reader to Appendix 2, where abbreviations are spelt out. I noted that the list of

abbreviations does not include “G8”, though arguably, this is such a well-known term that it doesn’t need spelling out. The term “Markush” is introduced on page 400 without explanation; an explanation appears later in the book, but not in Appendix 1, the list of patent-related terms. I also had some quibbles about some of the patent terminology in Appendix 1; for example, the explanation for “Infringement” failed to note that these are acts done without permission, and the differences between exclusive, sole and non-exclusive licences were not explained. In his entertaining history of Derwent, the author could have mentioned its popular punched card service. It is no fault of the author that the book does not consider the impact of Brexit on the UK’s patent systems – that is something for the next edition!

But these are minor quibbles. The book is readable, authoritative, wide-ranging and up to date. It is also well typeset and laid out, happily taking on the challenge of reproducing characters in scripts such as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic and Cyrillic. It is enlivened by remarks by the author on historical facts and interesting nuances, many of which I was not familiar with, such as the origins of the names ESPACE, and Farmdoc. It is unreservedly recommended to all who are involved in patents and patent searching, including patent agents and patent offices, but it is especially recommended for librarians and information scientists.

Charles Oppenheim