

ESPACENET HELP SHEET

Updated 8 May 2008



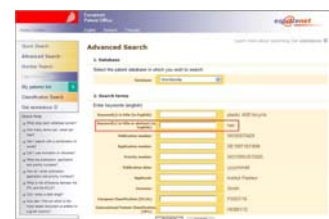
Espacenet is a database provided by the European Patent Office (EPO). It contains details of patents from many countries, for at least the last thirty years or so. It also contains much older patents from some countries, including Britain. It is probably the single most useful database if you are looking for what has been patented in a particular area recently.

The main disadvantage of Espacenet is that it only contains the information each national patent office sends to the EPO. Usually there will be a copy of the patent in pdf format and a lot of information about it in English. Sometimes there is a copy of the patent, but not much information available, so that you will only be able to find it by using classification codes or if you already know the publication number. Sometimes no copy of the patent itself will be available. If this happens, write down the number of the patent and ask the member of staff at the enquiry desk as we will often have it for you to read on paper, microfilm, or compact disc.

Sometimes the patent itself will be written in a foreign language. Often you will be able to find an English language version of the same patent from another country. Espacenet also has a translation function from the "Claims" or "Description" screen for each patent, which can provide automated translation of patent texts from French, German or Spanish to English.

If you are not in the British Library the main web address to use is <http://ep.espacenet.com>. The UK-specific server is at <http://gb.espacenet.com> and includes pdf copies of granted versions of recent British patents as well as the usual application documents.

If you want to search Espacenet for patents on a particular subject, the best way to start is to click on "Advanced search". This will take you to a page with a set of search boxes. To search patents by subject, type the words you want to search into the "Keyword(s) in title or abstract" box, the second from the top. (Do not use the top box, "Keyword(s) in title", as this will only search patent titles, which can be very unhelpful.) The database will automatically search for patents which contain all the words you type in their title and/or abstract. The system will give you a list of patents, and if you click on any of the patent titles you



will see bibliographic data for that patent. The yellow "Refine search" button on the list screen will take you back to the search screen. Your search strategy is still entered; it is at this point that you can refine your search.

Depending on what information the patent office involved has sent the EPO, it will have some or all of the following links available. The links which are unavailable will be greyed out.

"Bibliographic information" - you should see this when you first click on the title. It will include



some information about the patent, such as when it was published and who took it out, and usually an abstract and the most important illustration. In the top right of this screen, you can see the "Also published as" list of versions of this patent published in other countries. You can now see a "List of citing patents" here for certain patents, giving later patents which refer to them, although these lists are not as exhaustive as those available on the Derwent

database. For European Patent Office patents, you can also see their current status in the application procedure and whether they have been granted.

"Description" - this is all of the text in the main part of the patent, but without any illustrations.

"Claims" - this is the formal legal statement of exactly what is novel within the patent. It is often written in very formal language and can be difficult to understand, but it should not include anything which isn't in the description.

"Mosaics" - this shows small copies of all the illustrations in the patent.

"Original document" - this gives you a pdf copy of the printed patent exactly as it was published. To enlarge the document click on 'maximise' which is in red towards the top of the screen. If you wish to download or print a complete document, click on the red "Save full document link towards the top of the screen. The red "Print" link will only print out the page you are viewing at the time. Some extremely long documents cannot be downloaded in full and can only be printed page by page.

"INPADOC legal status" - this gives some information on whether the patent is in force or not. The information here can be quite difficult to understand if you aren't familiar with patents, and you should check with a lawyer before you do anything on the basis of it.

If you find a patent which is particularly close to what you are looking for, note down the European and International classification codes which appear in the "Bibliographic data" page. The European classification goes in the second from bottom search box on the "Advanced search" page, and the International classification in the very bottom search box. (Don't fill in both boxes at once.) This will retrieve patents on similar subjects.

If you are looking for patents by a person or a company, go to the "Quick search" page and change the radio button from "Words in the title or abstract" to "persons or organisations". Then type the name of the person or company in the search box and click "Search". You can also search for patents on a specific subject by a specific person using the "Advanced search" page, but you may

have problems deciding whether the person is recorded as "Applicant" (the person who applied for the patent) or "Inventor" (the person who had the idea). A company should always be searched for as "Applicant", but if you have a person's name you should try it as both "Applicant" and "Inventor" in two different searches.