

WIPO



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WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
GENEVA

SPECIAL UNION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT CLASSIFICATION
(IPC UNION)

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

Twenty-Seventh Session
Geneva, October 21 to 30, 1998

REPORT

adopted by the Committee of Experts

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee of Experts of the IPC Union (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) held its twenty-seventh session in Geneva from October 21 to 29, 1998. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America (21). The European Patent Office (EPO) was also represented. The list of participants appears as Annex I to this report.

2. The session was opened by Mr. A. Bruun (Sweden), Chairman of the Committee. Mr. M. Makarov, Head, International Patent Classification Section, WIPO, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director General of WIPO and acted as Secretary of the session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

3. The Committee unanimously adopted the agenda, which appears as Annex II to this report.

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

4. As decided by the Governing Bodies of WIPO at their tenth series of meetings (see document AB/X/32, paragraphs 51 and 52), held from September 24 to October 2, 1979, the report of this session reflects only the conclusions (decisions, recommendations, opinions, etc.) of the Committee and does not, in particular, reflect the statements made by any participant, except where any reservation in respect of any specific conclusion of the Committee was made or repeated after the conclusion was arrived at.

REPORT ON THE IPC-RELATED ACTIVITIES OF THE PCIPi SINCE MARCH 1998

5. The Committee noted the IPC-related activities of the PCIPi from March through June 1998 (see documents PCIPi/EXEC/22/6 and PCIPi/SI/21/6) and expressed its satisfaction with the work relating to the IPC that had been carried out by the PCIPi. The Committee noted, in particular, that the PCIPi Working Group on Search Information (PCIPi/SI), at its last session in June 1998, had considered 51 IPC revision projects and approved amendments to the IPC under those projects, thus having made a considerable effort in completing the preparatory revision work for the seventh edition of the IPC.

6. The International Bureau informed the Committee that the IPC training material containing the observations of the PCIPi/SI on patent documents selected under Task No. S-4 (*Selection of a set of patent documents exemplifying the problems explained in paragraphs 52 to 62 of the Guide to the sixth edition of the IPC, together with observations on how the documents can be classified*), as well as the comments and rapporteur reports submitted in the course of consideration of that Task, had been sent to the members of the Committee and other interested offices.

REPORT ON THE THIRTY-SECOND SERIES OF MEETINGS OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE MEMBER STATES OF WIPO

7. The Committee noted that the Assemblies of the member States of WIPO and the Unions administered by WIPO, at their thirty-second series of meetings in March 1998, had approved the establishment of the Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT) and dissolution of the PCIPi with the integration of its activities, as of July 1998, into the SCIT, with the exception of the activities relating to the preparatory IPC revision work which had been transferred to the IPC Committee of Experts.

8. Following the said decision of the Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO, the Committee agreed to consider in detail, at its next session in March 1999 (see paragraph 51, below), the IPC revision procedure in the framework of the Committee, as well as the IPC revision policy, on the basis of recommendations which should be elaborated at the Advanced IPC Seminar to be held in December 1998 at the Patent Office of the United Kingdom.

CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE IPC

Amendments Emanating from Revision Projects

9. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/27/2, containing amendments to the IPC approved by the PCIPI/SI, and its Suppls.1 and 2, containing comments on those amendments, submitted by the members of the Committee.

10. The Committee adopted a number of amendments to the IPC, which appear in the Technical Annexes to this report. Annex III to this report contains changes to amendments previously adopted by the Committee during the present revision period. Annex IX to this report lists the classes and subclasses to which the Committee has adopted amendments during the current revision period, and Annex X to this report lists the classes and the subclasses to which the said Technical Annexes pertain.

Observations Relating to the Amendments Considered

11. When considering the amendments proposed under Project C 318, the Committee agreed to indicate information on the transfer of subject matter separately for each group from the interval of the deleted groups A 61 F 13/46 to 13/54 (see Annex 8 of the Technical Annexes to this report), on the understanding that it was an exceptional measure caused by the creation of new groups in the deleted interval, since following the usual IPC practice for indicating transfer of the range of groups would disturb electronic management of data and lead to inconvenience for users of the printed version of the Classification. The Committee also agreed that, in view of the substantial changes of the classification structure in the field in question, it was not possible to present more detailed transfer information for the deleted groups. In this respect, the Committee indicated that, in principle, transfer notes in the IPC and information on the transfer of subject matter in the Revision Concordance List should be presented with the most possible precision so as to facilitate retrieval of relevant entries when searching with the use of different editions of the IPC, including automated identification of such entries. The Committee also pointed out that, in situations where precise information could not be given and it was unavoidable to indicate the transfer of subject matter for the interval of groups, search software on electronic versions of the IPC, in particular on the IPC:CLASS CD-ROM, should enable identification of groups which were present in a preceding edition of the IPC inside of the deleted interval.

12. In respect of the amendments proposed under Project C 281, the Committee discussed in detail the mode of presentation of indexing codes chosen from groups C 02 F 1/00 to 7/00 for association with classification symbols of group C 02 F 9/00 and noted that the proposed linked mode of presentation of those codes was doubtful in view of the last place rule applied in group 9/00 which would lead to the assignment of only one classification symbol for the majority of patent documents classified. However, realizing that the PCIP/ISI could have technical reasons for providing linking of indexing codes due to the nature of documents in this field, the Committee agreed to adopt the proposal of the PCIP/ISI (see Annex 30 of the Technical Annexes to this report). Following that discussion, the Committee also agreed that general guidelines should be elaborated for determining whether in any subject field in question indexing codes should be presented as unlinked or linked to classification symbols and that a simpler presentation of linked indexing codes could be considered to avoid errors in the data introduction caused by the current complex presentation.

CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO THE IPC EMANATING FROM THE CHECKING OF REFERENCES

13. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/27/3, containing changes to references in the IPC approved by the PCIP/ISI, and document IPC/CE/27/4, containing changes to references proposed by offices as a consequence of the amendments to the IPC forwarded to the twenty-seventh session of the Committee, as well as on comments on those documents submitted by offices.

14. Following some modifications made, the Committee adopted the proposed changes to references which appear in Annex IV to this report.

CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO THE SUBCLASS INDEXES IN THE IPC

15. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/27/5, containing changes to the subclass indexes in the IPC approved by the PCIP/ISI, and document IPC/CE/27/6, containing changes to the subclass indexes proposed by offices as a consequence of amendments to the IPC forwarded to the twenty-seventh session of the Committee, as well as on comments on those documents submitted by offices.

16. Following minor amendments made, the Committee adopted the proposed changes to the subclass indexes which appear in Annex V to this report.

REVISION OF THE GUIDE TO THE IPC

17. The Committee considered amendments to the Guide to the IPC approved by the PCIPI/SI and reproduced in document IPC/CE/27/7. After minor modifications made, the Committee adopted those amendments which appear in Annex VI to this report.

18. Following the request made by the PCIPI/SI to investigate a possibility of indicating in the IPC also notes which had been changed with respect to previous editions, the International Bureau reported to the Committee that notes having undergone changes of their texts in the seventh edition of the IPC could be extracted from the IPC Information System IPCIS and that those notes could be indicated, in analogy with changed groups of the IPC, by the Arabic numeral [7] in square brackets.

19. The Committee underlined the importance of providing users with additional information relating to the changed notes, but agreed that only notes having undergone a significant change of their wordings, which would influence classification in the fields concerned, should be indicated in the suggested way.

20. Having realized that selection of significantly changed notes would require review thereof by experts in the field and because of the short time available for the preparation of the final version of the seventh edition of the IPC, the Committee agreed that this task should be treated as a matter of urgency and requested the International Bureau to prepare, in November 1998, a listing of all changed notes and to submit it to offices volunteering to participate in the review thereof. The volunteering offices were requested to submit their proposals on the selection of the significantly changed notes to the International Bureau as soon as possible.

21. The Committee noted the following distribution of work among the volunteering offices:

<u>Office</u>	<u>Area of the IPC</u>
DE	Sections E and F
EP	Sections B and C
FR	Sections G and H
SE	Section A
US	Section D

22. On the basis of its above decisions, the Committee adopted the text of the addition to paragraph 30 of the Guide, relating to the indication in the seventh edition of the IPC of significantly changed notes. The Committee also approved the recommendation of the PCIPI/SI that the complete text of paragraph 30 should be included as the User Information at the beginning of each section of the IPC.

23. The Committee considered a modified proposal of the United States of America, reproduced in document IPC/CE/27/8 Suppl.2, aiming at the clarification in the text of the Guide of the non-obligatory character of the application of indexing codes.

24. Following detailed discussions, the Committee agreed on the text of a footnote introduced in Chapter V of the Guide (see Annex VI to this report), explaining to the user that policy in respect of the application of indexing codes is determined by competent authorities and that not all such authorities assign indexing codes to their published patent documents.

25. In the light of the above discussions, the Committee also agreed that the general question of the development of hybrid systems in the IPC should be addressed and principles of their use should be reconsidered in order to simplify such use and make it more efficient in the computerized environment.

IPC REVISION REQUESTS

26. The Committee agreed to consider requests submitted by offices to the International Bureau for inclusion in the IPC revision program on the basis of the current criteria for the selection of IPC revision projects, endorsed by the Committee at its twenty-third session (see Annex III to document IPC/CE/XXIII/8), on the understanding that if new selection criteria were to be elaborated by the Committee following recommendations of the Advanced IPC Seminar in December 1998, the whole set of the revision projects currently on the revision program (see also Annex VIII to this report) could be reconsidered.

27. The Committee discussed the revision requests contained in document IPC/CE/27/9, in the light of the comments reproduced in Suppl.1 to this document.

28. The Committee accepted the revision requests referred to in Annex VII to this report, subject to the following observations intended for the future revision work:

(a) re Projects C 411 and C 420 – The revision request contained in Annex 1 to document IPC/CE/27/9 was divided into two projects relating to subclasses A 47 B and G 06 K, respectively. The consideration of the two projects should be coordinated so that the results achieved may provide a well-defined borderline between relevant fields in those subclasses. In this context, comments to be submitted on Project C 420 should also address the question on whether it should be considered as belonging to the mechanical or electrical part of the IPC;

(b) re Project C 412 – The revision requests contained in Annexes 2 and 3 to document IPC/CE/27/9 were combined in one project, since they concerned related subject matter. It was noted that, in view of the very large file size of the groups under revision, a more detailed modified proposal could be expected;

(c) re Project C 413 – Possible overlap of proposed new groups with other areas of the IPC relating to the adsorption technique should be investigated;

(d) re Project C 419 – Possible overlap of the proposed group covering monitoring exhaust gases with subclasses G 01 L and G 01 N should be kept in mind;

(e) The revision request contained in Annex 7 to document IPC/CE/27/9 was combined with the existing project C 391, since they concerned related subject matter.

29. The Committee agreed to defer assigning of deadlines for various actions under the accepted projects to its next session, in March 1999, when a new revision procedure would be considered and, possibly, a system of priorities for the revision projects introduced.

IPC REVISION PROGRAM FOR THE SEVENTH REVISION PERIOD

30. The Committee considered the IPC revision program, contained in document IPC/CE/27/10, listing the IPC revision projects deferred to the seventh IPC revision period with the deadlines established for particular projects and adopted the said program as it appears in Annex VIII to this report. The International Bureau was requested to include the IPC revision program on the IPC area of the WIPO Web site, introducing thereto also information relating to technical fields to which the revision projects belong, and relevant translation information.

31. In order to provide continuity in the revision work until a new revision procedure has been established in detail, the Committee agreed that the period of application of the working procedure and methods which had been implemented for the revision work in the framework of the PCIPI should be extended to the first half of 1999.

32. The Secretariat informed the Committee in this context that it plans to reserve the following dates for the first session of a working group dealing with the preparatory revision work:

May 31, 1999 to June 11, 1999.

PREPARATION OF THE ADVANCED IPC SEMINAR

33. The International Bureau reported on the preparation of the Advanced IPC Seminar, to be held in December 1998 at the United Kingdom Patent Office, Newport, and informed the Committee that invitations to participate in the Seminar had been sent to members and observers of the IPC Union, other interested industrial property offices and selected organizations active in the field of patent information. The International Bureau outlined the program of the Seminar which included presentations and lectures on various topics relating to the IPC revision policy and revision procedure and discussions of the recommendations of the Seminar and indicated that texts of all the presentations and lectures would be made available at the Seminar and also sent to members and observers of the Committee.

34. The Delegation of the United Kingdom informed the Committee that a tour of the Patent Office would be arranged for participants, which would include demonstration of a CD-ROM-based search system.

35. The Committee reiterated its instruction given at the twenty-sixth session of the Committee (see document IPC/CE/26/8, paragraph 27) that the principal task of the Seminar should be to prepare draft recommendations in respect of the IPC revision policy and revision procedure, which should serve as a basis for discussions by the Committee at its twenty-eighth session, in March 1999, and further agreed that the mandate of the Seminar should include a possibility of establishing, if need be, a Task Force for further work on the recommendations of the Seminar in order to present them in a detailed form for consideration by the Committee.

36. The Committee also agreed that a composition of the Task Force if it had been established should be determined, in the short time after the Seminar, by the International Bureau in consultations with the members and observers of the Committee and that the Task Force should be responsible for providing, by the beginning of February 1999, draft working documents for the twenty-eighth session of the Committee, including a detailed new IPC revision procedure. The work of the Task Force should be conducted largely via e-mail exchanges.

37. Not precluding other specific topics which could emanate from presentations and lectures given at the Seminar, the Committee outlined the following sample topics that could be desirable to address, in particular, in the light of the current transition from paper-based to electronic search documentation:

- duration of the revision cycles;
- electronic versions as official publications of the IPC;
- priority of revision projects;
- use and development of hybrid systems in the IPC;
- revision working structure; composition of working groups;
- solutions to searching with the use of multiple editions of the IPC;
- revision of IPC rules.

MATTERS RELATING TO THE PUBLICATION OF THE SEVENTH EDITION OF THE IPC

38. Discussions were based on document IPC/CE/27/11 with its Suppl.1, containing an outline of the preparatory work for the publication of the seventh edition of the IPC, prepared by the International Bureau, and proposals submitted by offices for the introduction of new catchwords in the official catchword indexes, respectively.

39. The Committee noted that the International Bureau intends to publish, on paper, CD-ROM and the Internet, the seventh edition of the IPC, the official catchword indexes to the seventh edition and the corresponding Revision Concordance List in June 1999.

40. In respect of the updating of the official catchword indexes, the Committee agreed that the said updating would be based on a compilation of the amendments to the IPC adopted at the twenty-third to twenty-seventh sessions of the Committee, which would be submitted by the International Bureau, by January 1, 1999, together with the reverse lists of the catchword indexes and a list containing new catchwords and catchword phrases approved by the PCIP/IS, to offices volunteering to participate in the updating. The offices concerned were invited to submit proposals to the International Bureau by April 1, 1999.

41. The Committee also noted, with appreciation, that the following offices volunteered to participate in the updating of the catchword indexes:

English Catchword Index

<u>Office</u>	<u>Area of the IPC</u>
DE	Sections E, F and G
EP	Sections B and C
SE	Section A
US	Sections D and H

French Catchword Index

<u>Office</u>	<u>Area of the IPC</u>
CH	Sections G and H
EP	Sections B, C and D
FR	Sections A, E and F

42. In respect of the preparation of the revision concordance data between the sixth and seventh editions of the IPC, the Committee noted that the International Bureau would submit, by January 1, 1999, to the offices-rapporteurs for the revision projects concerned, the compilation referred to in paragraph 40, above, together with a list of groups in the IPC that had been deleted, with transfer information indicated for those groups. The offices concerned were invited to submit revision concordance data to the International Bureau by April 1, 1999.

43. In order to provide more detailed information in the Revision Concordance List for the user, the Committee agreed that the transfer information for the interval of deleted groups should be presented separately for each group from the interval.

44. For conducting the updating of the official catchword indexes and preparation of the revision concordance data, the International Bureau was requested to submit the compilation of the adopted amendments to the IPC, to the offices concerned, both in a complete and abridged form, electronically and on paper with one copy for each office. The International Bureau was also requested to submit, at the beginning of 1999, a valid symbol file relating to the seventh edition of the IPC to the members and observers of the Committee.

45. The Committee briefly discussed a new way of presentation of references in the IPC, proposed by Germany, and agreed that in the short time available for the preparation of the seventh edition it could not be implemented but should be considered for subsequent editions of the IPC.

46. The Committee also discussed a solution proposed by Germany for remedying the ambiguous situation in subclass B 31 B, where non-printed groups were allowed for use in classifying, but agreed that the whole structure of that subclass should be reviewed, for which no immediate solution was available. In this context, it was noted that Germany intended to submit a respective revision request.

47. The Committee approved, with minor changes, the proposals for the introduction of new catchwords and catchword phrases in the official catchword indexes, submitted after the last session of the PCIP/ISI by the Russian Federation (Project C 330), Sweden (Project C 384) and the United Kingdom (Projects C 317, C 319 and C 320).

PUBLICATION OF THE NEXT VERSION OF THE IPC:CLASS CD-ROM

48. The International Bureau reported on the planned publication, in June 1999, of a first version of the IPC:CLASS CD-ROM relating to the seventh edition of the IPC, which version would contain, in addition to the present contents of the CD-ROM, the seventh edition in English and French.

49. The International Bureau informed the Committee that the proposed improvements in the material provided, search software and user's interface would be implemented as far as possible, in particular, that the User's Guide would be included on the disk and that a possibility of displaying notes in the hierarchical mode would be realized. The International Bureau was requested to include on the CD-ROM also the versions of the Guide to the IPC relating to the preceding editions.

50. Finally, the Committee pointed out the interest of the users in having multilanguage versions of the IPC on the disk.

NEXT SESSION

51. The Committee noted that the Secretariat tentatively reserved the following dates for its twenty-eighth session:

Geneva, March 1 to 5, 1999.

THANKS TO MR. RAMPELMANN

52. Having noted that Mr. Rampelmann (EPO) would conclude his participation in the IPC revision work, the Committee and the International Bureau thanked him and expressed their appreciation of his excellent contribution, for many years, to this work, both as Representative of the EPO and in his capacity of Chairman of the Working Group on Search Information, wishing him success in his continued career in the EPO.

53. This report was unanimously adopted by the Committee at its closing meeting on October 29, 1998.

[Annexes follow]