

Quick & Dirty Patent Search Guide

Of the approximately 85 Patent and Trademark Depository Libraries (PTDL's) around the U.S., Reno's UNR has one at the Getchell Library, second floor. If you are near the UNR campus, it is best to go to the PTDL library and start a preliminary patentability search there.

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If the library is not convenient, one can begin the search on the internet: The U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (PTO) patent search page is: <http://www.patents.uspto.gov/go/pats>

On that website, it is possible to do a "word" search in the area of technology one is interested in. By following the directions on the "Advanced Search" page a list of relevant patents may be brought up in hypertext in order to view the drawings and read the abstracts of each one. Ordinary boolean search language is used, as described in the help menus. The same goal is to reduce the area of interest to the minimum number of patents to search. That can be accomplished by adding words to the boolean description to narrow the search.

Drawings will be displayed by clicking on "images." The advantage of the PTO site is one can also correlate the patent search with the U.S. Patent Classifications system in the event one wishes to expand the search using Class and Subclass. That URL is:

<http://www.uspto.gov/go/classification/uspcindex/indextouspc.htm>

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At the PTDL library one will find the staff very helpful and very knowledgeable. They will fill you in on the idiosyncrasies of the CD Rom searching system "CASSIS." It's an acronym for Classification And Search Support Information System.

Your first place to start is with the *Alphabetical Listing of General Subjects* book. It is an index of *common language* terms, such as "electronic switches" instead of "miscellaneous active nonlinear devices, circuits and systems", which is how the same subject would be listed in the patent classification manual.

The alpha listings will give some classification and subclassification identification, which you should jot down as a side note, to be used later if needed along with your word search.

Then go to the computer terminal where the CASSIS working screen can be brought up in the "Bibliographic" search mode. On the "Title or Abstract" line (top line) type in your key word, or words.

If the words cover a broad subject there will be displayed far too many patents to search, like 400 or so. That means it is necessary to go back and add or change words to narrow the subject search down to a workable number of patents to look up, say less than 100.

Example: Suppose we invented a new type of safety release device for ski bindings. The word "ski" indicates 10,820 patents have that word "ski" in their title or abstract. By adding the words "and binding" it narrows it down to 2,801. Then the added word "and safety" brings up 1,117; still too many. The words, "and release" narrows it finally to 891. That's still a lot, but searchable by cruising through the titles in the list displayed -- 50 at a time.

But if we had looked up "**ski bindings**" in the alpha index and jotted down Class and subclass 280/611, which is where ski bindings patents are classified, then we would only have to search 136 patents. In order to view those 136 patents in the CASSIS system at UNR, one can enter the class and subclass on the line indicated and press the function key F3. It will display all 136 in numerical order, with their titles.

We can't memorize that many patent numbers, so we press the function key (F4) to bring down the "**action**" menu in order to print out the list for searching in the Official Gazette books on the shelves.

We first scan the list and eliminate the ones that are not appropriate by crossing out the titles. What is left is what we will search.

Note: First, the "print" defaults must be set to: (defaults are changed by using the vertical and horizontal scroll keys)

Document Format	:	Brief Record
Include Search Text:	:	Toggle to "Yes"
What Range?	:	Current Document
Page Eject	:	Never
Print Graphics	:	Toggle to "No"
Start Print	:	Toggle to "Yes"

Press Escape key to toggle back to patent title list.

This happens to be a typical list of patents, but sometimes you have a rather long list that may include quite a few that are really not too relevant.

Now we can search the Official Gazette books, on the shelves, to get a look at a drawing, and read an abstract, of the remaining patents that are "in our ball park," so to speak.

That's about it. Once you spot a patent in the Official Gazette books, that looks like you need to read the full text and view all the drawings, the CD ROM reader will print out the full patent by using your library copy cards. Best of all, except for the copying costs, it's free.

DISCLAIMER:

This is a preliminary prior art patent search that will satisfy many questions concerning prior art that is already patented. It's useful to eliminate most **patented** information that might prevent patentability, plus it reveals and teaches technology in your area of interest. But it is not to be construed as equal to a complete, professional patentability search of *all prior art in existence*. That involves not only more thoroughness but also a search of *non-patented* material, such as technical papers and articles published in the relevant discipline.