



Update on the CFIB, the French Speaking Patent Information User Group



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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, the French Patent Information User Group (CFIB) has re-organized itself and considerably developed its activities. This article is an overview of the association's current activities.

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1. Introduction

The French Speaking Patent Information User Group – CFIB – was founded in 1988. Initially named « Derwent Club », it was exclusively reserved to French native members.

In 2005, the association opened its doors to any French speaking professionals (from Belgium, Switzerland, etc) with the exception of vendors. On average, about 130 professionals subscribe to CFIB every year.

A second important milestone occurred in 2009. Until then, the association was non-official and unstructured, but in 2009, it became fully reorganized with:

- a legal existence,
- organizational status,
- a board whose members are elected for a period of three years,
- paying membership, and
- active working groups (see next paragraph).

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Collaboration with other national associations also led CFIB to become a founding member of CEPIUG (the Confederacy of European Patent Information User Group) [1].

All these changes were initiated so that the CFIB could further develop its activities to become a more professional association.

More information about the history and mission of CFIB can be found in a previous publication in World Patent Information [2].

In the next few paragraphs we intend to highlight the main activities and developments at CFIB since 2009.

2. The board

As explained above, members of the board are elected for a period of three years and can then be re-elected. Initially the status of the association limited the number of board members to eight. This was revised in 2014 to allow up to ten members to join. Board members have the option to leave before the term of their mandate. Elections of board members occur during the CFIB Member Annual Meeting via direct vote.

President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer are chosen inside the board and by the board, other members becoming Advisors.

The CFIB board can be considered as the “engine” of the organization, focusing the activities of the different working groups during the year.

The initial board consisted of Ms Anne-Gaelle Darmont (President), Ms Colette Hedon (Vice-President), Mr Didier Bernard (Secretary), Ms Cecile Boyer-Joubert (Treasurer), Ms Fabienne Pirson (Assistant Treasurer), Mr Frederic Baudour (Webmaster), Ms Muriel Bourgeois (Advisor) and Mr Philippe Bodart (Advisor).

The current board as of June 2014 consists of Mr Frederic Baudour (President and webmaster), Ms Muriel Bourgeois (Vice-President), Ms Cecile Boyer-Joubert (Treasurer), Ms Fabienne Windels (Secretary), Mr Philippe Gorry (Assistant Secretary), Ms Emmanuelle Bourbon (Advisor), Mr Philippe Bodart (Advisor), Mr Samuel Hutsebaut (Advisor).

Ms Anne Coutin also served several years as Secretary.

3. Working groups

The Working Groups are probably the most important part of the Association as their members are constantly involved with creating value and developing competencies which will be presented at the Annual Member Meeting.

An overview of the different Working groups is presented below.

3.1. Tools

CFIB historically had two dynamic working groups. One of them is specialized in patent search tools. Today this group is divided into 3 subgroups, looking at tools which are mainly used by the members of the association: *Orbit*, *Patbase* and *STN*. This group allows the opportunity to exchange good practices, helpful tips, and to encourage open dialog with database providers.

In December 2014, the group initiated a collective project for the next three years to compare in detail the different tools. The results of this work will be presented every year during the annual meeting. Two other databases (*Total Patent & Thomson Innovation*) will soon be included in both this project and in the working group.

3.2. Patent mapping working group

Patent mapping is essentially a tool for decision making. Either for providing a “helicopter” view on a topic, or to explore a certain number of patents, or to benchmark a competitor's portfolio. The purposes are multiple and diverse so are the skills needed (semantics, statistics, data mining, data treatment, visualization, IT, patent mapping tools,...). Thus, the CFIB decided about two years ago to start a working group with the final goal to help its members to better assess the uses and practices of patent mapping. After a long incubation start, the group completed a preliminary project which was mainly to define patent mapping as internally understood and practiced by/for the CFIB, i.e the goals and needs of a patent mapping, and second, to make a quick landscape of the existing tools, which are quite numerous given the diversity of patent mappings.

For now, the patent mapping working group has turned its focus mainly on two points:- first, to assess a methodology needed to build good and efficient patent mappings (e.g. data collection and strategies, errors and noise removal, assignee names harmonization, machine/human translation or not, visualization and reports, ...) by discussing in the group the different steps to obtain a patent mapping study and exchanging best practices on those steps;- second, to benchmark some of the principal patent mapping tools that exist, keeping in mind that no one tool is good for every goal and need, depending on the final purpose and the customer of the

particular patent mapping study. Thus, the main goal of this benchmarking task will be to give some clues to the members of the CFIB on which tool(s) to use for what need when patent mapping. A direct sub-goal of the group, given that patent mapping is a fast moving field, will be to stay up to date with the benchmark.

Finally, as patent mapping is quite transversal in matter of skills and tools, it is planned that the patent mapping group will also interact with the tools working group.

3.3. Training working group

Created in 2011 with 12 active members and a total of 32 subscribers, the Training Working group's objectives cover various aspects of Patent Information Professional interests in a fast paced and challenging environment. The objectives concern three main focus areas:

- identify and share needs for training throughout the professional life to maintain and develop one's highly specialized skills, thanks to periodical update of a knowledge base of main training opportunities, mapping of competencies and best practices networking (including development of QRCs (Quick Reference Card) and availability of Training Materials for CFIB members).
- develop training modules and train peers (playing the role of trusted professional trainer) under a CFIB/INPI (French Patent Office) Partnership agreement, covering methodologies for handling patentability searches, FTO (Freedom-to-operate), validity searches and competition watches.
- involve resources in QPIP (Qualified Patent Information Professional) [3] certification processes through strong participation in CEPIUG (Confederacy of European Patent Information User Groups) Training working group; providing extensive support to create a syllabus for exam preparation.

The past three year work showed the outstanding added value and assets available for the patent information community by sharing through this TEAM initiative (Together Each Achieve More), further perspectives are considered going forward.

3.3.1. CFIB/INPI partnership agreement

During our Annual Meeting held in June 2014 at INPI (French Patent Office) headquarters in Courbevoie, a three year partnership agreement was signed between CFIB and INPI director Yves Lapierre [4]. This agreement covers four main aspects concerning patent Information:

1. CFIB participates in periodical reviews of a Patent Information Training catalog from INPI,
2. CFIB provides skills through volunteer members to become trainers for the INPI catalog training on offer,
3. CFIB provides suggestions, advice and support when testing INPI online services,
4. INPI provides logistics to support Certification exam for French speaking candidates.

In addition, CFIB community continues to welcome INPI employees as members to benefit from experience sharing & networking.

This agreement is already in place and three trainings have been held in November 2014 with full attendance. The assessment of this first initiative has shown the importance of involving professionals to include live experience in training paths; this will be further developed and strengthened in 2015 and beyond.

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