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## Conferences 2017

## A B S T R A C T

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We take a look back at the conferences we attended in 2017. There was a mix between small and large, academic and industry, that gives a broad and exciting view of the patent information usage landscape. The industry conferences have demonstrated, once again, the hot buzz around Industry 4.0 and anything “AI”, while the academic conferences show that there is real progress in the AI direction in computer science, albeit it is rarely used for the intellectual property domain, so far.

## 1. Introduction

This conference report covers four events attended by World Patent Information editors Jane List and Mihai Lupu. Namely East Meets West and PIUG Annual Conference, attended by Jane, and II-SDV and CIKM attended by Mihai. We hope that our review will give readers a flavour of the events, and help you decide which events to attend in 2018. Conferences and meetings are a great way to stay up to date with the latest trends in the patent information and related professions. For us as editors it is also a great way to meet potential authors, reviewers, and readers of the journal. We also take the opportunity to discuss journal matters with our editorial advisory board members. We look forward to meeting you in 2018.

## 2. The international conference on search, data mining, and visualization (II-SDV)-April 2017 (ML)

Every year in Spring, about 60–100 participants gather at the end of April in Nice to discuss the latest developments in advanced search solutions, data and text mining, and visualization technology. While the conference does not explicitly exclusively target the intellectual property community, de facto, participants come primarily from our extended community.

The latest iteration of the event started, as usual, on Sunday, with a workshop. This year, Patrick Beaucamp gave an introductory workshop on R, a programming language catering to statistical data analysis. This workshop was matched at the end of the conference, on Wednesday, by a half-day workshop comparing Excel, which probably is known to all of us, and R, which has a much smaller audience, but, as we had seen in the workshop, can do much more with significantly larger amounts of data.

In between the two workshops, the conference programme covered two full days of talks, product presentations, and exhibitions. Overall, machine learning and neural networks were again the talk of the town, and practically all speakers had something to say about that. Pierre Bernassau, for instance, presented Sysstran's

recurrent neural network-based translation method, which builds on top of the open-source code started by the Harvard NLP group.<sup>1</sup> On the first day Mihai particularly noted Francisco Webber's talk about their semantic folding model, which, although brain-inspired, is not an artificial neural network. Both of these technologies look indeed very promising.

On the side of the users, Alexander Klenner-Bajaja showed the ongoing efforts of the European Patent Office to introduce semantics in their pipeline. Of particular interest (at least to me) was the focus on benchmarking. I have long been an advocate of repeatable and reproducible experimentation outside of the academia and into industry practice.

The second day of the conference also consisted of four sessions interspersed with interesting exhibition and networking breaks. The first of these focused on so-called explicit semantics: graphs, ontologies, but did not miss a talk about machine learning in general either.

In the afternoon, Willem-Geert Lagemaat talked about the (potential) future use of Virtual Reality and how that will change the way we interact with information. Indeed, it appears to be a fact that virtual or augmented reality will be part of the technology landscape, and we will be able to use it. How exactly this will be done, such that it is both ergonomic and actually more efficient than “traditional” information interaction methods, remains to be seen.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed attending the SDV conference [1]. It is a relatively small event, but such events are perfect for a close interaction between all participants and discussions lead to collaborations and innovation, to the benefit of all.

## 3. East Meets West April 2017 (JL)

Also in April Jane headed to Vienna for the annual East Meets West 2 day event which is organized by the European Patent Office. This conference is also relatively small with just over 100 attendees who all share the common need to access and review Asian patent information. Over the two days, attendees can find

<sup>1</sup> <http://nlp.seas.harvard.edu/>.

out more about search tools, translation options, analytics methods, and changes in legal and prosecution paths at the Asian offices. Formal training opportunities are also available. This year the formal presentations began with a presentation on NLP in Chinese patents from Professor Benjamin K. Tsou [2]. This was followed by a talk on the similarity searching functionality for finding Korean documents in KIPRIS. There were changes in the Indian patent system in 2016, and the Korean patent system in 2017. Both jurisdictions now have a post-grant opposition type procedure, and in both jurisdictions applicants can now request a fast examination process (in Korea this is under Article 59(2), and in India Rule 24C. Following the changing programme of East Meets West, each year allows us to track the relative importance to European users of patent information in the different languages. Chinese remains the most significant language by volume, and the problem of Chinese Utility models remains, but the spot light has shifted to other languages and offices. This year news from India was presented alongside news from Japan, Korea and China. Discussion rounds focussed on Russian patent information, ASEAN information, Taiwan patents, BRICS, data protection issues in the light of the forthcoming GDPR legislation a topic of interest to all, utility models, and Arabic language documents. Although some discussion rounds worked well, others were less successful, relying as they did on attendees volunteering for roles on the spot, e.g. to chair, take notes and report back to the conference. I would suggest inviting people to take these roles prior to the conference so that they may come prepared, and/or to provide experts for each round. It was 5 years since I had attended this conference, and I noted a shift away from industry presentations illustrating the problems faced by patent analysts towards office presentations. However the high level problems were well presented in the round up talk by Jiri Slavik of Sanofi Generics, namely: industry needs access to reliable, up to date patent information from all corners of the globe to support freedom to operate (FTO) reporting, and for this we need to understand what information is available (application document, granted document, legal status information), and to know about changes in legislation and procedures at different offices which might how to challenge third party IP in non EPO countries. I can highly recommend East Meets West [3] to anyone who needs to keep up to date with Asian patent information (and that means all of us) and also the excellent service provided by the EPO's Asian patent information team [4], who are largely responsible for putting this event together.

#### 4. PIUG annual conference-May 2017 (JL)

The PIUG annual conference [5] takes place each year in May; this year the conference was held in Atlanta, GA. This year around 150 patent information professionals gathered to share experiences, knowledge and learn from each other. The theme was 'The Complete 21st Century patent searcher – addressing our skills gap'. The event was supported by 21 sponsors and exhibitors, whose presence enhances the event for attendees who need to keep up to date with the latest software and tools for patent analysis. It is ably organized from programme to the last detail by volunteers at PIUG. The opening address was given by Nicholas Belkin of Rutgers University who presented his research into information retrieval, from the human perspective. His research focuses on what people do when they are engaged in search tasks (session oriented IR). He gave a couple of examples of research into human aspects of patent search, using patent infringement search examples. He also pointed to future technological methods of measuring IR progress, addressing the need to acknowledge that information

seekers change whilst they are seeking as they gain knowledge. Personalisation of information seeking support is another of his research goals, as is the utilization of technology to understand more about the human angle, e.g. through tracking searchers' eye movements for instance, and facial expressions. There followed three full days of talks (31 in all), panel discussions, product updates, and more discussions. The annual PIUG conference is a must for US based patent searchers from industry, and increasingly those working for and setting up their own patent search firms, although there are fewer 'practice' based industry talks, concerned with the nitty-gritty of search and evaluation of documents, sufficient knowledge sharing and pre and post conference training events, including on CPC from the USPTO make the event useful for those new to patent search. All presentations are available through the PIUG WIKI to members. Although many of us are 'old hands' my first PIUG was in 2006 there are always first time attendees so I think the human aspect in our complex IR task of patent searching remains as important as ever. Although I won't be at PIUG in 2018, sadly as its the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference, I am pleased to say that Mihai will be there representing World Patent Information.

#### 5. The international conference on information and knowledge management (CIKM)-November 2017 (ML)

CIKM is the foremost conference bringing together topics from information retrieval, data management and knowledge management. As such, it is particularly relevant for the field of intellectual property, because it covers a technology spectrum that overlaps completely with what we see in use today in our industry: database technologies, unstructured data management (e.g. text processing, image processing) and explicit semantics (i.e. knowledge graphs). Though patents or trademarks are not specific topics, a workshop on patent information retrieval (PaIR) had been organized in collocation with CIKM from 2009 to 2011, and papers applying the aforementioned technologies to patents appear regularly (there were one in 2016, three in 2014, one in 2013, three in 2012, and so on).

Before going on to the scientific papers presented this year, let us first note the general organization of the conference, and report on the keynote speakers.

CIKM 2017 [6] started officially with a workshop day on November 6th, though it is worth mentioning that a hackathon had been organized the week before, and the AnalytiCup a competition-like exercise, endowed in 2017 with \$60,000.00 in prizes, was running throughout the summer. The awards ceremony for the hackathon and the Cup were also on the first day of the official conference, in parallel to the workshops. Of these, I would just mention the Workshop on Interpretable Data-Mining – Bridging the Gap between Shallow and Deep Models, organized by Xia Ben Hu and Shuiwang Ji [7]. This is an ever more important topic, as new, neural-network based models are difficult to understand by any human and dedicated effort has to be concentrated on how we can make sense of the decisions that such models provide us.

On Nov. 10th the conference ended with a Tutorial Day, where eight tutorials, some half some full-day, covered topics of interest (e.g. Commonsense for Machine Intelligence, Task based Search, Knowledge Extraction and Inference from Text) in a more didactic manner than a typical paper presentation at the conference.

The main conference started with keynote presentations. Rajeev Rastogi from Amazon talked about the Machine Learning methods

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