

Speaker Notes: Special libraries and COVID-19 - Lessons learned and future directions - Special libraries and COVID-19

Purpose - Turn what we've learned out of COVID to our advantage – supporting people working from home, adapting to new ways of working, creative ways of researching community. Discuss how to leverage COVID to advocate for libraries – case studies; what will change as a result of this.

Today I want to talk about a few of the projects the IP Australia library service have been involved in during the COVID 19 pandemic. In summary I want to look at:

- Work for Patents Analytics hub and inter departmental group/taskforce
- Work for policy on stopping the theft of IK in the IP system
- Reference work which was enabled through a digitisation process

For us to be able to be involved and work on some of these projects, we really needed to have two things in place before the pandemic:

1. the infrastructure e.g.technology/systems, and
2. built strong relationships with workgroups across the organisation

We all realise that for a modern LIS to survive and prosper – it needs to ultimately show value to decision makers (senior management). Librarians have some wonderful skills in information organisation, reference and research, systems and technology that are very much useful in other contexts outside of traditional library work. For me, this means not seeing the service as sort of a separate entity within an organisation but moving into the centre and aligning it with the organisation's core business. It means embedding yourself within the organisation, becoming a part of the work of other areas. It means proactively engaging with clients and sometimes going out and getting work (or putting your hand up to take things on) rather than waiting for it to come to you. Coming initially from the public library area this was initially quite a foreign idea.

- Work for Analytics hub (see: <https://www.ipaustralia.gov.au/tools-resources/patent-analytics-hub>)

Back in March, the IP Australia Library (known as Research and Information Services or RIS) were approached by the Patents Analytics Hub. The Hub is an internal data analysis service which uses patent data to create reports for the public to inform decisions on policy, research direction, commercialisation, intellectual property protection, business strategy, marketing, collaboration, and licencing. The hub was called in to do some urgent work, working alongside other departments to prepare research for decision makers on COVID. RIS were assigned three tasks:

1. Providing literature searches on COVID-19 related topics (e.g. face masks, surgical goggles, ventilators, battery technology, virus test kits etc) for the use of Patent Analytics Hub in the development of reports for the taskforce. Literature searches needed to address various issues and questions such as:
 - a. which domestic companies were the main manufacturers of various products or had the capacity to manufacture (e.g. a plastics manufacturer could make face shields or if there was a ventilator shortage or could we use ventilators from veterinary surgeries etc)?
 - b. Research on design, technology, and materials for development of equipment, and
 - c. latest news and commentary about the state of the industries involved e.g. supply, how was industry going about bridging supply shortfall etc?

We found the best way to add value to the search was to provide a summary for each article that succinctly explained how it addressed the query we were addressing.

2. Customising the centIPede application to provide up to date feeds on coronavirus developments. CentIPede is an application the team developed in house which allows us to scan the information environment e.g. academic journals, government Hansard, social media – twitter, blogs, news, websites etc for information > filter by keyword > aggregate several sources into topical areas and then display up to date content in widgets. See https://libraryresources.ipaustralia.gov.au/uploads/MISC/CentIPede_COVID.html
 3. Automated daily eNewsletter for the Cwth Dept of Health task force that monitored progress on vaccine candidates and organised content under each candidate.
- Work for Policy on stopping the theft of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in the Intellectual Property (IP) system

The project we were assigned is part of a suite of about 12 that looks to prevent the misappropriation of Indigenous Culture in the IP system. The project we're looking at specifically involved looking at the feasibility of developing a dictionary database of Indigenous language terms that could be used for consultation by Trade Mark (TM) examiners. See examples of Australian Indigenous dictionaries <http://ausil.org.au/node/3717>

The project involved addressing the following:

- Identifying the core issues and challenges involved.
- Identification of IK language resources along with contact people from the institutions and groups that own or have oversight over them.
- Analysis of copyright and licencing issues.
- Investigation of overseas examples of the protection of indigenous knowledge in the intellectual property system.

The result of our investigations was a report with recommendations from our findings. From here in July 2020 we were asked to re-join the project and address the recommendations of the initial report (which recommended an engagement process be undertaken with relevant stakeholders including university language programs, relevant government departments, institutes and Indigenous groups mainly through language centres). The aim was to seek advice and guidance on the suitability of development of an IK dictionary database or resource and how we might go about doing it.

This was fascinating work and involved reaching out to and setting up meetings with the various groups. It involved a lot of cold calling as well, particularly to remote Indigenous communities. We needed to ensure we solicited feedback from a suitable cross section of interests. Most meetings were held through various video conferencing platforms.

The result was a report with recommendations. Findings include:

- Use of Indigenous terms formally (i.e. in a trade mark) almost always causes offence and feelings of disenfranchisement within communities when used by non-Indigenous entities.
- Common concerns raised with use of language included:
 - words/terms are spelt and pronounced correctly.

- a term is used in the proper context and with the intended meaning. Words can have the same pronunciation but a different meaning from one language group to another.
- Some terms are for the exclusive use of certain people within the community.

Creation of a dictionary

- A dictionary can provide a word and vague meaning, but it would not provide insight into a raft of other cultural connotations associated with words. It also raised concerns for language owners about a potential a loss of control of their data. There is a distrust of technology – communities do not want their language possibly mixed up with other languages and misattributed.
- No single source exists that covers all Australian Indigenous languages (unlike in NZ where it's more homogenous). For IP Australia to create a language database, permission would need to be sought from each individual language group (c. 250). The database would need to be built from scratch with the assistance of professional linguists. This process would likely take several years at considerable cost.
- Data should not be harvested from existing language sources using data transport standards like XML, SGML, OAI, JSON or FTP, or through an API without consent. Producers of language resources have worked closely with communities over several decades and have secured permission to use the material for a specific purpose and in an agreed format.
- Language centres almost unanimously cite the need to follow cultural protocol. This protocol is strikingly similar from centre to centre across the country. An application to use language needs to be in writing and put to the language committee (or similar forum) where the elders and others in the community can decide on use.

We are now onto the next stage of the project which is looking at ways to fulfill the need of TM examiners to get information about Indigenous language terms for the examination process. This will likely involve:

1. setting up formal agreements with groups like AIATSIS who have the knowledge and resources to assist the identification of IK terms, provide definitions and determine the groups and communities concerned,
 2. building relationships with Indigenous communities through language centres, and
 3. look at automation options to identify TM applications that potentially seek to use IK. This might be done by building an algorithm that uses linguistic structures to identify these applications e.g. the suffix 'up' (place of) in Cowaramup or Yallingup.
- Digitisation and reference queries while working remotely

Over the last few years, we had our whole collection of official journals dating back to c. 1904 digitised by professional digitisation services. We also digitised our historic collection of material that is largely corporate in nature – old papers, reports, newsletters etc. We did the historical collection ourselves inhouse, although initially we sought the services of a historian who analysed the collection and provided advice concerning what material could be digitised and discarded and material that was of ongoing historical value and should be retained in paper also. This proved extremely helpful during the pandemic when the team was required to work remotely. We received several reference queries from IPA staff, IP lawyers and the public that we were able to service due to the digitisation initiative. We often get queries about historic patents, trademarks or papers – some dating back to the 1800's.

Having these digitised to archival quality, searchable and available via the LMS or share drive was a life saver.

Example record: https://libraryresources.ipaustralia.gov.au/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=334&query_desc=kw%2Cwrdl%3A%20colonial%20patents

I hope that by me sharing with you some of the initiatives the IPA library were able to work on remotely during the COVID period - that it might give you some ideas for your service about leveraging your unique skills and the resources you have in your libraries. In summary, I spoke about our work providing literature searches for the COVID 19 patents analytics hub and taskforce, our work on helping the organisation better protect IK in the IP system and the benefits of digitisation projects to assist collection access for reference work while working remotely.