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Conference report

PIUG 2015 Biotechnology Conference, South San Francisco, February 2015

This annual meeting is organized by The Patent Information Users Group (PIUG) and focuses on best practices for patent information professionals who specialize in biotechnology search and analysis. The 9th annual PIUG Biotechnology Meeting returned to Genentech and the West Coast this year, after meeting the previous three years in Massachusetts (Cambridge and Boston). The theme of this year's meeting was "Maximizing Value in Biotechnology Searching with New Technologies and Trends."

The meeting consisted of one day of plenary lectures, two days of conference workshops, a tour of the Genentech Cell Culture and Purification Pilot Plants, and an opportunity to attend the two-day PIUG Patent Searching Fundamentals course. Conference attendance was great with over 70 attendees registered for the plenary session. Regions across the States were represented with patent professionals from the East Coast, Mid-West, and West Coast in attendance, along with a number of international attendees.

The Program Committee Co-Chair, Ruben Diaz of Genentech, opened the plenary session with a warm welcome to the attendees. He highlighted the need of patent searching professionals to demonstrate their value to their clients and to their employers, and how leveraging new technologies could maximize their value.

Plenary session lectures started with an illuminating presentation given by Michelle Lewis of Genentech, entitled "FTO and Patentability Searches: Meeting Business Goals". She challenged the attendees to think like a business person when conducting IP searches. In order to look for the big picture, or "Forest View", of a search, one must consider what IP risk is the key driver behind the search. By looking for the business goal behind an IP search, a patent search professional may better position themselves to maximize the value of the search. Her talk echoed throughout the rest of the day's lectures, with speakers pointing out "Forest View" considerations in their presentations.

John Cabeca, the Silicon Valley USPTO Director, brought the conference attendees up to date on the progress of USPTO initiatives and pilot programs. He reviewed the USPTO strategic goals including optimizing patent quality and timeliness, and achieving organizational excellence. These goals will allow for increasing stakeholder partnerships, access and participation. One way the USPTO is addressing these goals is by establishing a regional presence via satellite offices, such as the Silicon Valley USPTO which will be opening this year. John also discussed the transition to CPC and highlighted the new USPTO Assignment Search tool.

Qin Meng moderated a lively panel session on maintaining biotechnology search team excellence. Panel members included Doreen Alberts of Theravance Biopharma, Ruben Diaz of Genentech, and Greg Roland of Novartis (NIBR). When discussing factors that drive a successful search service, it was uniformly agreed that communication is the key to a high quality search service. Doreen noted that successful search services answer the right question at the right time. Greg offered that continuous improvement was necessary to maintain high quality, and that presentation of information mattered. Ruben added that passion about both science and searching (including search tools) was an important factor in a successful search service. The wide-ranging topics covered by the panel also included strategies to prioritize high impact work, lessons learned during times of growth and during times of cutbacks, and personal approaches to mentoring new search professionals.

Monica Weiss-Nolan of Sanofi and John Willmore of BizInt walked us through a case study on the Ebola virus, to demonstrate techniques of integrating sequence results with multiple patent sources to provide better reports and visualizations. The search strategy leveraged multiple patent databases to employ the strengths of the different databases (*e.g.*, sequence results from GenomeQuest, legal status from Orbit, standardized assignee information from Cortellis). These databases output unique result fields and, as most patent searchers know, merging results from disparate sources is not a simple task. The case study demonstrated how BizInt tools can be utilized to identify and merge duplicate patent results and to display the data from a desired database for a particular field. Additionally, while some manual clean-up is necessary, the tools can also remove inventor names from the assignee field, standardize company names in the assignee field, simplify and visualize legal statuses of a patent family, and integrate multiple sequence records into a single result row.

Heinz Mueller of the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property gave a presentation evaluating the inventive power of select countries with a strong high-tech economy. Patent output (measured using patent class searches) was compared to multiple global innovation indices. Many varied and novel charts were used to visualize the comparisons for different perspectives. One would expect that the innovative power of a country would be evidenced by the size of its patent landscape and the analyses presented did show that the biotech patent landscape correlates with the general global innovation indices. When performing these analyses, it is important to know which data to use and with which chart to visualize the data. This requires well-trained expertise.

Henk Heus of GenomeQuest and Nancy Vosnidou of Comprehensive Science Communications spoke on the challenges of patent searching in the life sciences. The goal of a patent search is a set of highly relevant results with broad patent authority coverage; but the broadest coverage often yields a diluted result set, with many documents not related to the life sciences. As noted earlier in the day, another challenge in searching life science patents is the collation of sequence search results with keyword search results. A case

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study on a peanut gene and vaccines related to peanut allergies was utilized to demonstrate how GenomeQuest's new integrated life science search platforms can merge keyword results and sequence results to yield a single unified report that only contains patents relevant to the life sciences.

Leah Sandvoss of Pfizer gave an informative lecture on the use of predictive biomarkers in companion diagnostics for cancer therapeutics. Predictive biomarkers (cancer gene mutations) can be used to stratify patients by identifying likely and unlikely responders. Companion diagnostics can increase the success rate of therapeutics by identifying and selecting a targeted population. Many companies are now developing therapies and companion diagnostics in parallel. Search strategies to capture predictive biomarker technologies are broad and capture many documents for review. The searcher must understand the type of biomarker, how the biomarker is measured and claim language used to disclose predictive biomarker technologies.

Julia Heinrich of Bristol Myers Squibb demonstrated the utility of text-mining in a case study of an antibody-drug conjugate. Text-mining is a tool that can be used to quickly and efficiently search patents by looking for patterns and relationships between terms. Ado-trastuzumab emtansine was used as an example on the Linguamatics-I2E platform. A small number of highly-relevant documents were identified, illustrating the streamlined process.

Sponsors provided product reviews throughout the day showcasing their patent searching and analytical tools. To conclude the plenary session, closing remarks were provided by Alison Taylor of Abbott, Program Committee Co-Chair, and Doreen Alberts, Planning Committee Co-Chair. A dinner was organized after the main meeting to facilitate networking and further conversation on the day's topics. The two days of workshops consisted of in-depth presentations by BizInt, Minesoft, GenomeQuest, Linguamatics, FIZ Karlsruhe, CAS and the USPTO. The conference highlighted new technologies in biotechnology patent searching and informed attendees of emerging trends. The tools and concepts presented contribute to the patent searcher's ability to maximize their value and to demonstrate their added value to the client.

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