

University of Massachusetts Amherst

From the SelectedWorks of Paulina Borrego

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Investigating Ways to Deliver Patent & Trademark Services to the UMass Amherst Community and Beyond - Strengthening Relationships, Making New Contacts, and Exploring Connections

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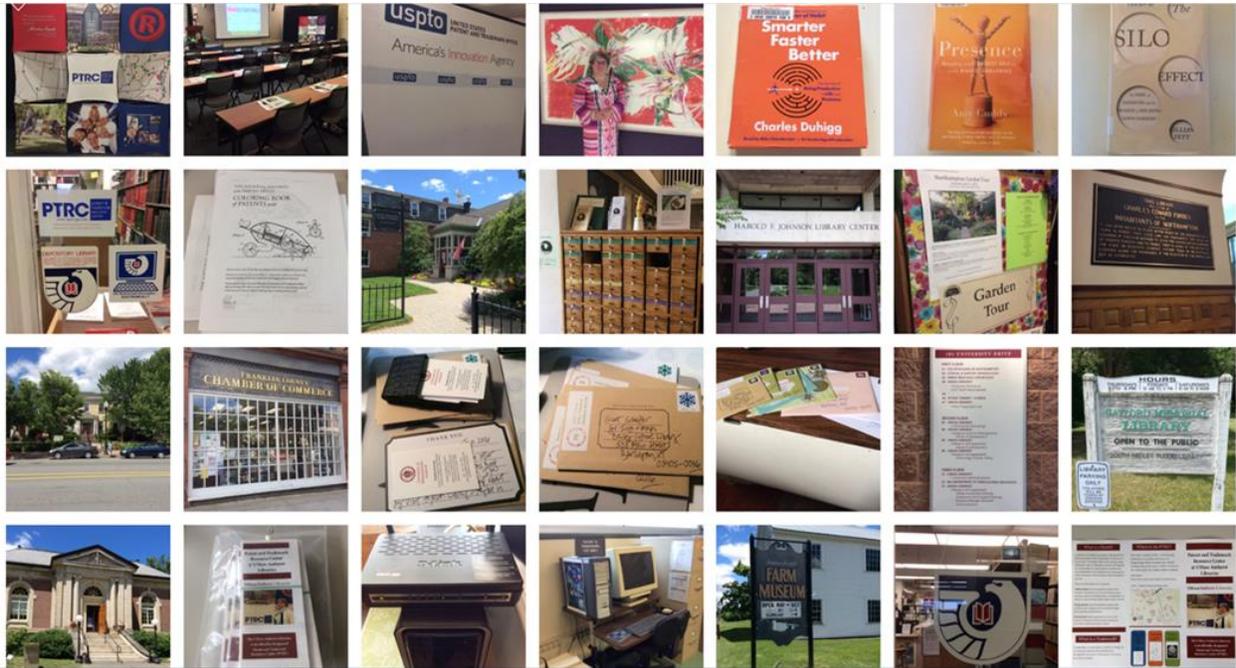
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Paulina Borrego – Science & Engineering Librarian - Sabbatical Report 1 February – 15 July 2016

Investigating Ways to Deliver Patent & Trademark Services to the UMass Amherst Community and Beyond – Strengthening Relationships, Making New Contacts, and Exploring Connections



Row 1: USPTO Annual Training Seminar (3) / Social Sciences Librarians Boot Camp @ Tufts University Invited Presenter / Organizational Theory and Productivity Readings (3)

Row 2: PTRC UVM Burlington, VT / National Archives Patent Coloring Book / Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce / Hampshire College Library (2) / Forbes Library (2)

Row 3: Greenfield Public Library / Franklin County Chamber of Commerce / Thank-you notes written to each person met with (3) / UMass Amherst Tech Transfer Office / Gaylord Memorial Library

Row 4: Gaylord Memorial Library / UMass Amherst Libraries PTRC Brochure / Internet Modem / PTRC UVM Burlington, VT / Hadley Farm Museum / PTRC UVM Burlington, VT / UMass Amherst Libraries PTRC Brochure

Paulina Borrego

Science & Engineering Library
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Sabbatical Report

Sabbatical Dates: 1 February – 16 July 2016

Investigating Ways to Deliver Patent & Trademark Services to the UMass Amherst Community and Beyond – Strengthening Relationships, Making New Contacts, and Exploring Connections.

Sabbatical Proposal (in brief)

The purpose of my sabbatical was to focus on investigating ways to deliver patent & trademark services to the UMass Amherst community and beyond. Since becoming the Patent & Trademark Resource Center (PTRC) Librarian in 2009 I have delivered patent & trademark services to various members of the UMass Amherst community – faculty, students, and community members. In the past few years the demand for patent & trademark services has increased to make up more than 20% of my total user interactions (LibAnalytics statistics). The scope of my sabbatical will be threefold, focusing on the three different user types requesting patent & trademark services - faculty, students, and community members.

Summary

During my sabbatical project I created a number of deliverables to aid in the education and outreach to the local patent & trademark community, used the tools created to contact various targeted groups, and followed up with in-person meetings to discuss ideas for education and outreach to specific community members. I contacted and visited local public libraries, business centers, orchards and nurseries, as well as academic libraries educating them of PTRC (Patent & Trademark Resource Center) services and discussing possible outreach opportunities. I continued to strengthen the connection between the UMass Amherst Libraries PTRC and the Technology Transfer Office, investigating ways to provide continuity of services to faculty and graduate students on campus. Throughout it all I made new contacts for outreach and was exposed to fresh ideas to explore and implement. Such connections will in turn broaden the scope of outreach and assemble a collection of ideas for future programs.

Background

The UMass Amherst Libraries became a Patent & Trademark Resource Center (PTRC; then named a Patent & Trademark Depository Library, PTDL) in November 1984. It is one of 85 such centers in the United States, with less than half PTRC's being public libraries (31), more than half being academic libraries (46), some state libraries (7), and one special library (Linda Hall Library in Kansas City, Missouri). These PTRC's are located in 46 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. While each PTRC is different in staffing and strengths, the core set of services provided to the public remains the same.

The PTRC program began in 1871 under the United States Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) to help carry out its mission. The role of the PTRC is to disseminate patent & trademark information as well as support the diverse intellectual property needs of the public. At the time the program was established patent and trademark information was solely paper-based and therefore providing safe storage, organization, and access to materials was the main focus. Today, with the majority of materials being available online (color plant patents being the one exception), much of the work in a PTRC is to help users locate and navigate through information on the USPTO website, gain access to online filing systems, understand the patent and trademark processes, and teach users effective strategies for patent and trademark searching.

A good portion of my time as a librarian is spent helping users with patent & trademark questions (about 20% of my total user reference queries according to my LibAnalytics statistics). The majority of these interactions are virtual (phone or email), not scheduled as part of my regular work day, and seem to be varied in their nature therefore making planning and streamlining difficult. The fact that the majority of the questions are from people with whom I have no direct contact makes putting the question in-context challenging. Also, and for me the biggest frustration, is that questions come with no regularity and are greatly varied in the level of expertise and time they each require to answer. Here I find that my relationship with patent & trademark questions and information is reactive rather than planned.

It was my hope that this sabbatical would afford me the opportunity to step back from the day-to-day answering of patent & trademark questions to get a better perspective on the types of questions I deal with and therefore chart my outreach efforts accordingly. My plan was to set the stage for my sabbatical by doing some reading on organizational theory and work productivity, look at past patent & trademark email questions received since becoming the PTRC librarian in 2009 to glean trends, create a spreadsheet of contacts for outreach, create a brochure that can be used for outreach and education efforts, and lastly visit local public libraries and business centers to educate the community about services offered by the UMass Amherst Libraries Patent & Trademark Resource Center.

Timeline

Stage 1 (February 2016)

- Setting the stage – readings in organizational theory and work productivity

Stage 2 (March and April 2016)

- Create a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of past patent & trademark email questions received – type of question and user contact information for future outreach efforts
- Create a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of contacts– public library, business center, nursery and orchard, as well as academic library contact information for patent & trademark outreach
- Create a UMass Amherst Libraries patent & trademark brochure for outreach efforts

Stage 3 (May, June, and part of July 2016):

- Send an email blast to public libraries, business centers, orchards and nurseries, as well as academic libraries for patent & trademark outreach opportunities
- Follow up meetings with public libraries, business centers, orchards and nurseries, as well as academic libraries about outreach opportunities

Outcomes Stage 1 - Setting the stage – readings in organizational theory and work productivity

I found it helpful to step back from the day-to-day issues of working in the Science & Engineering library as a reference librarian and try to get a glimpse of the library and its place in the University environment. I spent a great deal of time thinking about how the library is organized, its reporting lines, how information is communicated within the organization, and lastly the culture of the organization.

During this initial stage of my sabbatical I read three books to help understand the library as an organization in relation to my own day-to-day work habits and productivity. The titles I chose to read were:

- Tett, G. (2015). *The silo effect: The peril of expertise and the promise of breaking down barriers*.
- Duhigg, C. (2016). *Smarter faster better: The secrets of being productive in life and business*.
- Cuddy, A. J. C. (2015). *Presence: Bringing your boldest self to your biggest challenges*.

Upon reflection of my own work habits I have come to understand that I am very result and outcome focused, tend to be driven by a to-do list each day, and often get immersed in daily routines at the expense of thinking big and exploring new solutions. Since much of the work I do is in reaction to a specific user question, I sometimes may not spend as much time as I should reading new patent & trademark literature, spending the necessary time exploring the never-ending USPTO website changes, searching the internet for patent & trademark trends, and simply reading current news items that pertain to this area of the business sector.

Recommendation:

- Proactively schedule time each week to devote to patent & trademark reading and continuing education

Outcomes Stage 2 – Creation of Outreach Materials

Since becoming the PTRC Librarian in 2009 I have maintained a folder of user email queries pertaining to patents & trademarks. During my sabbatical I reviewed each user question, created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing the user contact information (to be used for future program outreach) and categorized the type of question asked to see if any trends could be discovered. I

reviewed approximately 162 patent & trademark email queries collected since 2009. To my surprise, I came to see that the vast number of the email questions received pertained to business name searches (trademarks). Since I had thought that most of my time was spent explaining how to conduct an initial patent search, this is not what I expected. Having this information will allow me to create an online research guide (Library LibGuide) that is more targeted to this query type.

I also spent time using the MBLC (Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners) website to create a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of Western Massachusetts public library contacts along with business contacts, and orchard and nursey contact information for patent & trademark outreach. The final outreach Microsoft Excel spreadsheet contained contact information for 86 public libraries in the Western Massachusetts region, 14 business centers, and 34 orchards and nurseries. I also included contact information for about a dozen academic institutions in the local area.

Lastly, I worked with my local Northfield public librarian, Deb Kern, to create a patent & trademark brochure to be used for outreach efforts. This deliverable took much longer than I anticipated due to having to learn the Microsoft Publisher program. Once the first draft of the brochure was created it was tested on a number of public library users and changes made with a number of iterations along the way. When completed a hundred or more of these brochures were printed out, tri-folded, and distributed locally.

Recommendations:

- Continue to maintain a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of patent & trademark user queries categorizing each question type and saving user contact information
- Continue to maintain a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of public library, business center, orchard and nursery, as well as academic institution contact information for outreach purposes
- Continue to update UMass Amherst Libraries Patent & Trademark Resource Center brochure as needed

Outcomes Stage 3 – Meeting people and making connections

Outreach to Local Public Libraries, Business Centers, Orchards and Nurseries, as well as Academic Libraries

With the outreach brochure completed, and armed with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of contact information for local public libraries, business centers, orchards and nurseries, as well as academic institutions in Western Massachusetts, I was ready to make some headway into educating the public about services the UMass Amherst Libraries PTRC has to offer. To begin I wrote an email targeting each contact group introducing myself, offering my services, and indicating a willingness to meet in person to discuss program opportunities. I followed up on each reply to the email blast and in some cases met with the public librarian, business center personnel, orchard or nursery manager, or academic librarian to discuss tailored outreach programs specific to their community. Selected highlights include:

- Meeting with Hampshire College librarians Rachel Beckwith, Access and Arts Librarian, and Heather McCann, Interdisciplinary Science Librarian, to discuss patent & trademark education and services for faculty and students, as well as plans to create a brochure about plant patents to accompany their existing seed library
- Accepting an invitation to present at the Social Sciences Librarians Boot Camp at Tuft University 3 June 2016. My presentation introduced attendees to the three different types of patents – utility, design, and plant patents, and demonstrated various strategies for patent searching. There were many attendees from local Boston academic institutions, providing a good base for future outreach
- Meeting with Lisa Downing, Assistant Director/ User Services Librarian, at Forbes Public Library in Northampton to discuss possible programs for the community, as well as plans to create a plant patent brochure for the next garden tour in spring 2017
- Presenting at the Five-College Libraries All-Staff meeting doing a lightning round presentation about UMass Amherst Libraries Patent & Trademark Center
- Meeting with public librarians Lisa Prolman, Assistant Director, and Marjorie Curtis, Assistant Head of Borrower Services, at Greenfield Public Library to discuss public programs for the community
- Meeting with public librarian Christine Quigley, Director of the Gaylord Memorial Library, in South Hadley to discuss programs for the community, as well as working with the seed saving club to plan a future presentation about GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) utility patents
- Meeting with Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce workers to discuss services for newly established businesses in the area (trademark education)
- Meeting with Franklin County Chamber of Commerce workers to discuss services for new businesses in the area (trademark education)
- Meeting with Ben Clark of Clarkdale Fruit Farms in Deerfield, MA to discuss apple patents

Recommendations:

- Continue to reach out to local public libraries, business centers, orchards and nurseries, as well as academic libraries for patent & trademark outreach opportunities
- Continue to accept invitations to present on the topic of patents, trademarks, and UMass Amherst Libraries PTRC services

Outreach to the UMass Amherst Intellectual Property Community – Technology Transfer Office

I also met with Michael Jaremchuk, Senior Licensing Officer, of the UMass Amherst Technology Transfer Office (TTO) to discuss patent & trademark education and services to faculty and graduate students. In the fall we had investigated the feasibility of purchasing the patent database IP.com that would provide continuity of patent searching between the Technology Transfer Office, the UMass Amherst Libraries PTRC, and the Berthiaume Center for Entrepreneurship. The prospect of having one common tool used by the three Intellectual Property (IP) entities on campus would provide a seamless transition for faculty and graduate students as they investigate the feasibility of patenting an invention as well as creating a competitive marketing strategy. Having a common

search tool would provide a common patent searching experience and a common language to foster greater communication and cooperation between campus entities.

Recommendations:

- Continue to investigate the feasibility of acquiring a patent search tool that can be used to educate the UMass Amherst IP community as well as foster cross-campus connections
- Continue to meet with the Technology Transfer Office to foster improved communication, investigate partnerships, and provide coordinated education and service of IP issues to the UMass Amherst community
- Investigate ways to educate the UMass Amherst community about patent & trademark issues through targeted print brochures, displays, posters, and signage

Outreach to Other Academic Patent & Trademark Resource Centers (PTRC's)

In the spring I made a trip to the University of Vermont in Burlington to meet with Scott Schaffer, the PTRC representative, to investigate how they deliver patent & trademark education and services to their academic community and beyond. I found many of the same issues and challenges as I face here at UMass Amherst, foremost the challenge of educating the community about services and sustaining a high level of service given a solo librarian experience. Scott echoed much of my own experience, that of being pulled by other more immediate user demands at the expense of patent & trademark continuing education and outreach efforts.

In the fall I hope to travel to Clemson University in South Carolina to meet with Jan Comfort, PTRC representative, to investigate her successful implementation of a one-credit undergraduate course offered to engineering students focusing on patents and patent searching. I plan to be there the days that the students are presenting their formal project presentations to the class and discover first-hand the outcomes of such a course.

Recommendation:

- Continue to make connections with the UMass Amherst engineering departments and investigate the feasibility of offering a patent education course

Outreach to Local Garden Clubs and Beyond

Throughout my time as the PTRC librarian I have become fascinated - maybe even obsessed with - the packet of paper plant patents that arrive each week from the USPTO. Since plants are often bred for their color variations, and since computer monitors display color so differently depending on the monitor (non-standardization of color on computer monitors), the USPTO prints out each new plant patent photograph to assure the public can plainly see the true color of the specimen. Although one is able to view the plant patent on the internet, the photograph of the plant is in black & white, and the color photograph can only be viewed in paper format at a PTRC. The UMass Amherst Science & Engineering Library holds filing cabinets full of these paper plant patents that are underutilized.

It has become my personal mission as the PTRC Librarian to educate as many people as I can about this unique patent format. To that end, I have started contacting local garden clubs offering to do presentations on plant patents. Thus far I have presented to my local Northfield Garden Club and plan to do a similar presentation to the Amherst Garden Club in the fall.

Recommendation:

- Continue to reach out to local garden clubs to educate the public about plant patents

Another area of personal interest is local historical patents. Since this area of the Pioneer Valley was known for agricultural farming there are many historic patents of farming implements and machinery. During my sabbatical I began reaching out to local senior centers to offer customized presentations about historical patents of that particular town. In the fall I will be presenting to senior citizens at the Northfield Senior Center about historic patents filed by Northfield residents. Although this type of presentation is very time consuming to create due to the research not being readily accessible on the internet, I hope it will get easier with experience and be of great interest to the targeted local community.

Recommendations:

- Continue to reach out to local communities about historic patents filed by residents of their town
- Reach out to the Hadley Farm Museum to investigate historic patent outreach opportunities
- Reach out to Historic Deerfield Village to investigate historic patent education opportunities

Complications Encountered

While on sabbatical I had hoped to rework my Patent & Trademark Research Guide (LibGuide) but was unable to work on this project due to technological barriers. In preparation for my sabbatical I had purchased a new computer and installed office products to aid in the creation of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, emails, and the PTRC brochure. During this time I had also hoped to rework my Patent & Trademark LibGuide which is used as an outreach and education tool to the online community. Unfortunately my ISP (Internet Service Provider) connection in Northfield, MA proved too slow to accommodate the online editing work required to update this resource. I did move forward by creating a storyboard of how to rework the LibGuide and will make such changes upon return to work where online editing barriers are not an issue.

Conclusion

“Sometimes all you need is to step back and gain a new perspective”

This sabbatical has afforded me the opportunity to focus on one aspect of my UMass Amherst librarian position that is often unpredictable, unplanned, and ever changing. Given the fact that patent & trademark questions are becoming an increasingly part of my daily reference service, it was beneficial

to step back from this library service after a few years of hands-on experience and gain some perspective, focus, and retool for the future.

During my sabbatical I created a number of different deliverables that helped, and will continue to help me, in my outreach efforts. I reviewed each email user query pertaining to patents & trademarks since becoming the PTRC Librarian in 2009 (approximately 162 email queries), categorized the type of question and saved this and the user email contact information in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for future outreach purposes. I also created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing contact information for 86 public libraries in the Western Massachusetts region, 14 business centers, 34 orchards and nurseries, as well as a dozen academic institutions in the local area. This Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of contacts was then used for an email blast targeted to each of those groups. Included in the email message was an UMass Amherst Libraries PTRC brochure that I created with the help of a local public librarian and perfected with the help of user input.

Follow up meetings were scheduled with those groups who responded to the outreach email to discuss patent & trademark education, outreach, and services specific to their community. Involvement with those groups is continuing as well as with the contacts who did not respond to the initial email offer for services. This sabbatical project has put me in contact with new groups to target for outreach, as well as those closer to home on the UMass Amherst campus such as the Technology Transfer Office. Overall, I have made connections with new people, as well connections to new ideas and ways to offer education and outreach services. I look forward to getting back to work at the UMass Amherst Science & Engineering Library and implementing some of the ideas envisioned during my time on leave.

Respectfully submitted – Paulina Borrego / 27 July 2016