



HANDBOOK ON INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Ref.: Standards – ST.6

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STANDARD ST.6

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE NUMBERING OF PUBLISHED PATENT DOCUMENTS

*Revision adopted by the SCIT Standards and Documentation Working Group
at its second session on December 6, 2002*

INTRODUCTION

1. The aim of this Recommendation is to give guidance to industrial property offices wishing to change their present numbering systems or to start new numbering systems for published patent documents. For those industrial property offices wishing to use the application number as publication number, reference is made to WIPO Standard [ST.13](#).

DEFINITIONS

2. For the purposes of this Recommendation:

- (a) the term “patent documents” includes patents for inventions, plant patents, design patents, inventors’ certificates, utility certificates, utility models, patents of addition, inventors’ certificates of addition, utility certificates of addition, and published applications therefor. “Documents” means patent documents, unless otherwise stated;
- (b) the terms “publication” and “published” are used in the sense of making available:
 - (i) a patent document to the public for inspection or supplying a copy on request;
 - (ii) multiple copies of a patent document produced on, or by, any medium (e.g., paper, film, magnetic tape or disk, optical disk, online database, computer network, etc.);
- (c) the terms “unexamined” and “examined” refer to an examination made as to substance, as distinct from the preparation of a documentary search report or an examination made as to form which latter examination is ordinarily made by an industrial property office immediately upon receipt of an application.

REFERENCES

3. References to the following Standards are of relevance to this Recommendation:

WIPO Standard ST.1	Recommendation Concerning the Minimum Data Elements Required to Uniquely Identify a Patent Document;
WIPO Standard ST.3	Recommended Standard on Two-Letter Codes for the Representation of States, Other Entities and Intergovernmental Organizations;
WIPO Standard ST.10/B	Layout of Bibliographic Data Components;
WIPO Standard ST.13	Recommendation for the Numbering of Applications for Patents, SPCs, Industrial Designs and Layout-Designs of Integrated Circuits;
WIPO Standard ST.16	Recommended Standard Code for the Identification of Different Kinds of Patent Documents.

BACKGROUND

4. Patent applications filed with an industrial property office are normally given an application number upon initial filing. Subsequently, depending upon the patent law in question, one or more patent documents may be published being either the application as filed or based upon the application (e.g., an examined application or a granted patent). The application numbers given commonly form, at least in part, a rising numerical sequence. In this respect reference is directed to WIPO Standard [ST.13](#).



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5. Comprehensive collections of patent documents are organized, in general, in one of two ways. They may be stored as a serial file with the documents being ordered according to the number given upon publication—in paper form or in electronic form, e.g., on CD-ROM—or they may be stored as a classified file based upon some patent classification system, e.g., the International Patent Classification. When stored as a serial file, file integrity problems are most easily solved when the numbers given to the published documents form a continuous rising sequence chronologically applied according to the publication date of the documents.

6. The publication of a given patent document does not normally occur at a fixed interval of time following the application or filing date, but depends upon many factors which differ in the various patent laws.

7. The number given to a published document may differ from that given to its application upon initial filing.

PRESENT SITUATION

Single Publication Systems

8. Many industrial property offices make only a single publication of a patent document following an application. The single publication is normally of the granted patent of which multiple copies are produced. A publication number is given to each different patent document using a sequential publication numbering system. In some instances, an industrial property office will publish separate kinds of documents each with their own sequential numbering system.

Multiple Publication Systems

9. Alternatively, many industrial property offices publish a patent document at more than one procedural step during the processing of an application. This often results in several published patent documents based upon a single application.

10. The unexamined application may be published by laying the application open to public inspection, by supplying a copy upon request or by producing multiple copies (see paragraph 2(b)). The number by which the industrial property office identifies the publication is frequently the application number given upon initial filing, but the office may give the document a separate number forming part of a sequential numbering system and allocated upon publication.

11. The examined application may be published by laying the application open to public inspection, by supplying a copy upon request or, most frequently, by producing multiple copies. The number by which the industrial property office identifies this publication may again be the application number given upon initial filing. Under other systems the office may give the document a separate number forming part of a sequential publication numbering system. In systems in which an unexamined application has already been published under a given publication number, the same publication number may be given to the examined application document. Alternatively, the examined application document may be given a different publication number; both numbers may or may not form part of a publication sequential numbering system.

12. The granted patent is published in nearly all systems by producing multiple copies and by giving the document a number forming part of a sequential publication numbering system. The publication number given may or may not be the same number given to an earlier published document.

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE NUMBERING

13. The following recommendations are made to give guidance to industrial property offices wishing to change their present numbering systems or to start new numbering systems for published patent documents:

- (a) the publication number should consist of digits (i.e., numerals) only;
- (b) the total number of digits, subject to a maximum of 13, is to be determined by each industrial property office according to its needs. The number of digits should be as short as possible to satisfy those needs;
- (c) the number given to a published patent document (first-level publication according to WIPO Standard [ST.16](#)) should increase in a numerical sequence within a given year or a longer period of time;
- (d) the number given to a second or subsequent published patent document resulting from an application should be the same number as that given to the first published patent document resulting from that application; for example, 1/2002/000002 would be used for the first level publication (e.g., 18 month publication of an application), for the granted patent publication and for any corrections resulting from a single application and its publications. For complete identification of a patent document, see WIPO Standard [ST.1](#);



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(e) the number should only be used for patent documents resulting from a single application. For example, in the case where the same numbering sequence is used for more than one type of industrial property right (e.g., patent for invention and utility model) or more than one regional office within a country or organization, then the same publication number should not be used more than once:

(i) to establish sufficiently unique document numbers, offices may use additional identifiers of one or two digits, e.g. for the designation of the type of Industrial Property Right or the Regional Office, if necessary. Any additional identifiers must be considered to be included within the maximum number of digits as set forth in paragraph 13(b) above. WIPO Standard [ST.16](#) codes, when used as recommended by WIPO Standard [ST.1](#), provide the recommended way of providing publication level information. WIPO Standard [ST.16](#) also provides information on some types of industrial property rights when related only to patent documents;

(ii) where an application spawns additional applications (e.g. an application claiming domestic priority, a continuation of a prior application, a divisional application, etc.), these additional application(s) should be considered to be separate application(s) and thus should be assigned different publication number(s);

(f) if found suitable, the year of publication of the patent document may form part of the publication number; in that case, the publication number may be formed by a year, the serial number and if required, an additional identifier as provided for in subparagraph (e):

(i) in case of a year, the year should be represented by four digits according to the Gregorian calendar and preceding the serial number;

(ii) in case of a serial number it is recommended that a maximum of seven digit serial number be unique, in the sense of subparagraph (e), for all patent document publications;

(iii) the order of the components should be:

- a. the identifier, if necessary;
- b. the year, if found suitable;
- c. the serial number;

(g) for the sake of readability of a publication number, when presented in visual form:

(i) the identifier, year designation and serial number may be separated from each other by a slash or a dash;

(ii) the serial number may have additional digit grouping through the use of commas, or dots, or spaces.

Examples of presentation of publication numbers according to this recommendation:

2001-12345	2001/12345		
2001/1234567	2001/1,234,567	2001/1.234.567	2001/1 234 567
1234567890	1,234,567,890	1.234.567.890	1 234 567 890

If different types of industrial property rights share a number sequence:

2003/123456 for a patent for invention
 2003/123457 for a utility model publication
 2003/123458 for a design patent, etc.

or, where there is an overlap in the number sequence between different types of industrial property rights and an additional identifier is used to establish uniqueness, e.g., 10 for a patent for invention, 20 a utility model, 30 a design patent:

10/2003/123456 for a patent for invention
 20/2003/123456 for a utility model publication
 30/2003/123456 for a design patent, etc.

or, where there is an overlap in the number sequence between different regional offices within a country or organization and an identifier is used to establish uniqueness:

1/2003/1234567 for a patent for invention from Region A using 1 as an identifier
 2/2003/1234567 for a patent for invention from Region B using 2 as an identifier



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FURTHER OBSERVATIONS

14. It should be noted that the two-letter code according to WIPO Standard [ST.3](#) and the kind of document code according to WIPO Standard [ST.16](#) do not form part of the publication number. However, both codes, along with the publication date of the document (INID codes (40) through (48), as appropriate), have to be associated with the publication number for the complete identification of the patent document. In such cases, the rules set out in WIPO Standard [ST.10/B](#) should be followed.

15. It is advisable that the numbers given to patent documents about to be published but withdrawn just before publication be announced in the official gazettes and be designated by an appropriate indication such as “withdrawn” or “no patent document published under this number.” Further, it is advised that industrial property offices insert blank sheets in place of such missing documents in the series of documents they issue, each sheet bearing the number of a withdrawn patent document with the above-mentioned indication.

Note: A survey of numbering systems used, or intended to be used, by industrial property offices with regard to applications, published documents and registered rights relating to patents for inventions, plant patents, design patents, utility models, SPCs, industrial designs, topographies of integrated circuits and trademarks is given in Part 7.5 of the WIPO Handbook on Industrial Property Information and Documentation.

[End of Standard]