

Patent Databases and Academic Engineering Librarians: A Pilot Survey

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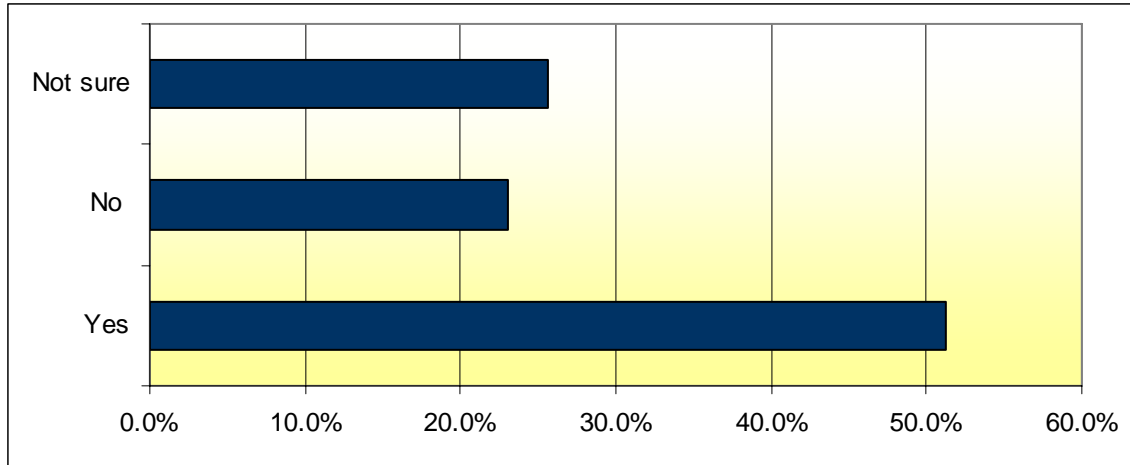
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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to collect preliminary information and feedback from academic engineering librarians on the uses and usefulness of patent literature and databases in their day-to-day work with students, faculty and researchers.

Methodology: A SurveyMonkey survey consisting of eight questions was posted from April 28 through May 16. An e-mail inviting academic engineering librarians to complete the survey was posted on ELDNET-L, an open e-mail list maintained by the Engineering Libraries Division of the American Society for Engineering Education. The list has approximately 500 subscribers.

Results: Forty people completed the survey.

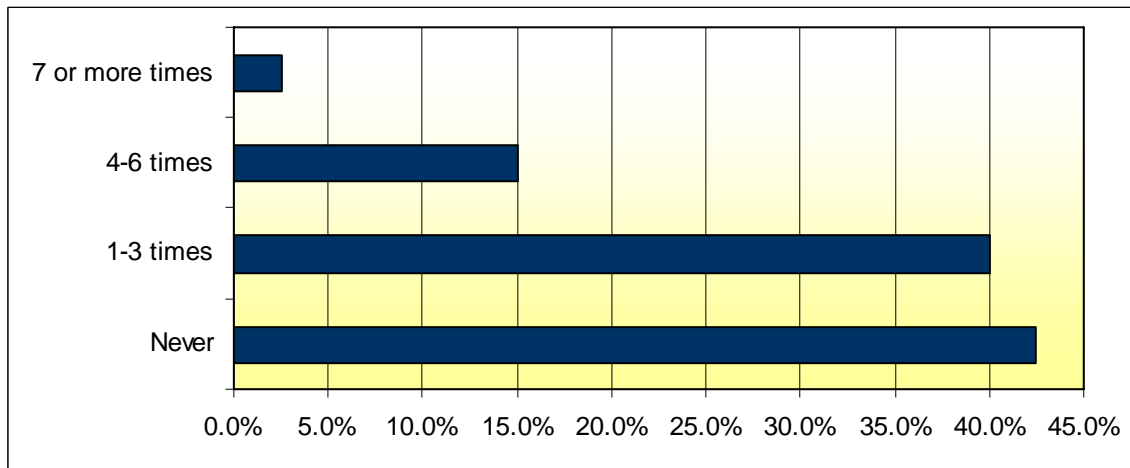
Question 1: At my university, patent literature is included (formally or informally) in the undergraduate engineering or engineering technology curriculum. For example, upper level undergraduates are expected to know what a patent is and how to use patent databases.



Yes	20	51.3%
No	9	23.1%
Not sure	10	25.6%

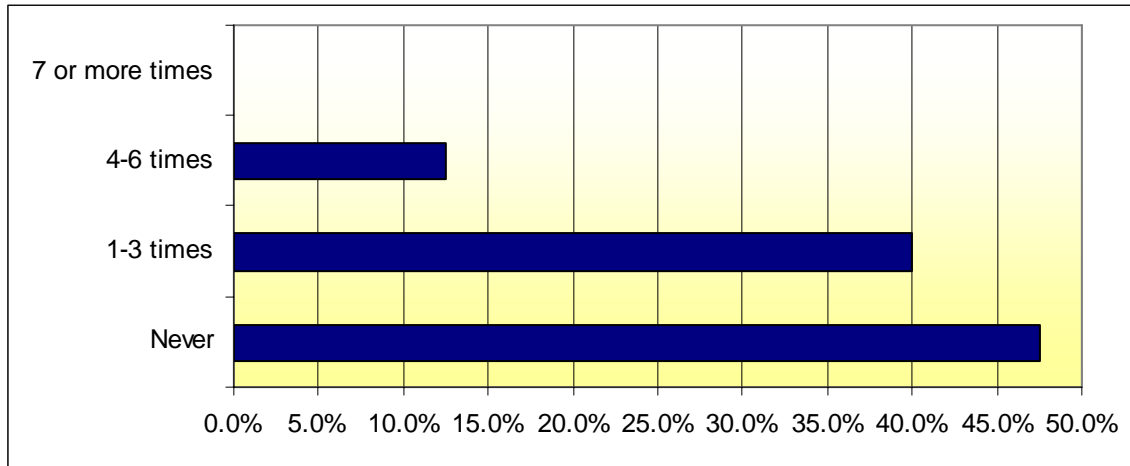
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Question 2: In a typical academic year, librarians at my university give patent workshops to engineering undergraduate students:



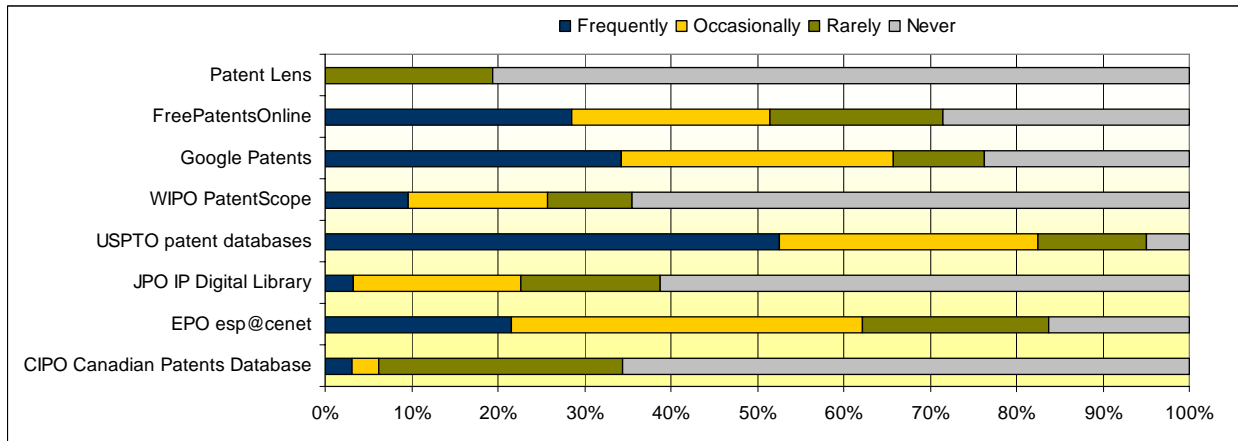
Never	17	42.5%
1-3 times	16	40.0%
4-6 times	6	15.0%
7 or more times	1	2.5%

Question 3: In a typical academic year, librarians at my university give patent workshops to engineering graduate students:



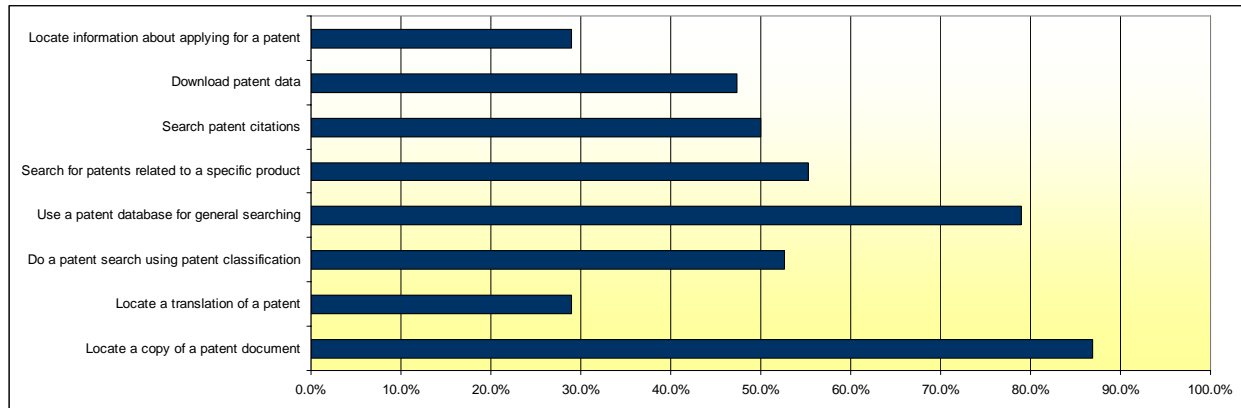
Never	19	47.5%
1-3 times	16	40.0%
4-6 times	5	12.5%
7 or more times	0	0.0%

Question 4: Librarians at my university teach the following web-based patent databases:



	Frequently		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
CIPO Canadian Patents Database	1	3.1%	1	3.1%	9	28.1%	21	65.6%
EPO esp@cenet	8	21.6%	15	40.5%	8	21.6%	6	16.2%
JPO IP Digital Library	1	3.2%	6	19.4%	5	16.1%	19	61.3%
USPTO patent databases	21	52.5%	12	30.0%	5	12.5%	2	5.0%
WIPO PatentScope	3	9.7%	5	16.1%	3	9.7%	20	64.5%
Google Patents	13	34.2%	12	31.6%	4	10.5%	9	23.7%
FreePatentsOnline	10	28.6%	8	22.9%	7	20.0%	10	28.6%
Patent Lens	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	19.4%	25	80.6%

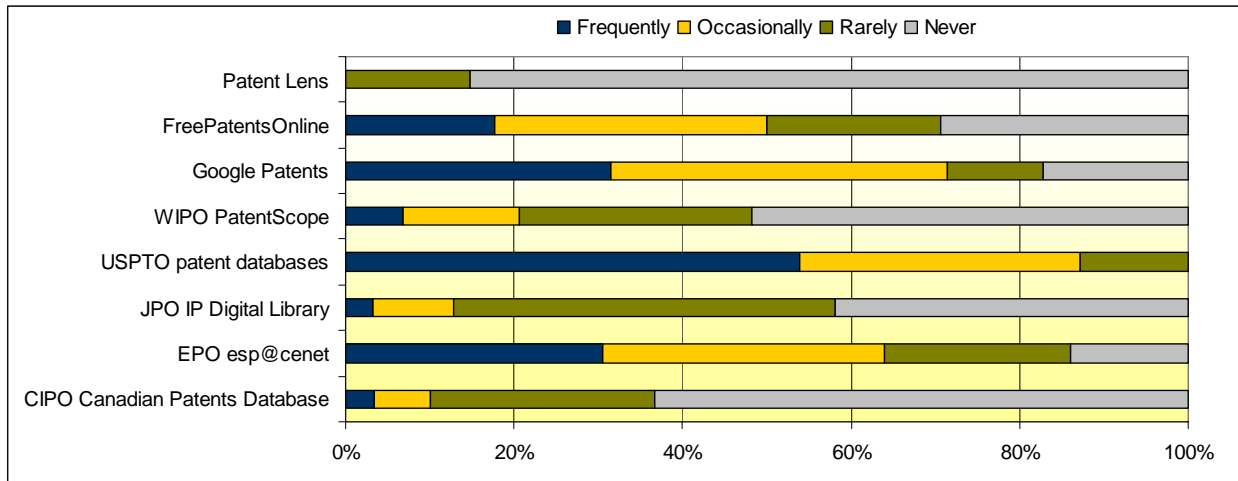
Question 5: In the past year, I have helped a student, faculty or staff member (check all that apply):



Locate a copy of a patent document	33	86.8%
Locate a translation of a patent	11	28.9%
Do a patent search using patent classification	20	52.6%
Use a patent database for general searching	30	78.9%
Search for patents related to a specific product	21	55.3%
Search patent citations	19	50.0%
Download patent data	18	47.4%
Locate information about applying for a patent	11	28.9%

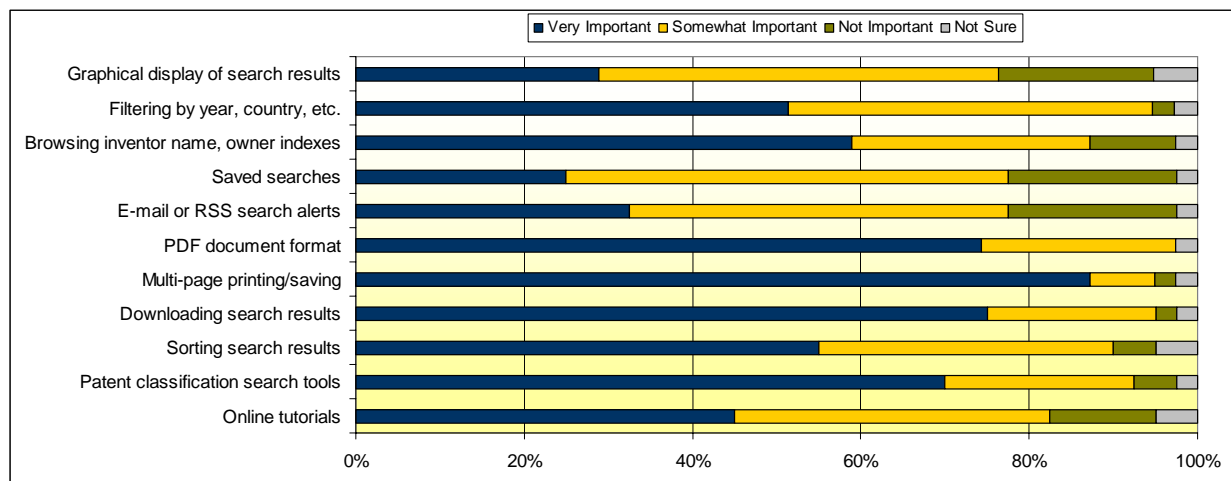
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Question 6: I use the following web-based patent databases when providing research and reference services:



	Frequently		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
CIPO Patents Database	1	3.3%	2	6.7%	8	26.7%	19	63.3%
EPO esp@cenet	11	30.6%	12	40.0%	8	22.2%	5	13.9%
JPO IP Digital Library	1	3.2%	3	9.7%	14	45.2%	13	41.9%
USPTO patent databases	21	53.8%	13	33.3%	5	12.8%	0	0.0%
WIPO PatentScope	2	6.9%	4	13.8%	8	27.6%	15	51.7%
Google Patents	11	31.4%	14	40.0%	4	11.4%	6	17.1%
FreePatentsOnline	6	17.6%	11	32.4%	7	20.6%	10	29.4%
Patent Lens	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	14.8%	23	85.2%

Question 7. In regards to patent office databases, please rate the following desirable features:



	Very important		Somewhat important		Not important		Not sure	
Online tutorials	18	45.0%	15	37.5%	5	12.5%	2	5.0%
Patent classification search tools	28	70.0%	9	22.5%	2	5.0%	1	2.5%
Sorting search results	22	55.0%	14	35.0%	2	5.0%	2	5.0%
Downloading search results	30	75.0%	8	20.0%	1	2.5%	1	2.5%
Multi-page printing/saving	34	87.2%	3	7.7%	1	2.6%	1	2.6%
PDF document format	29	74.4%	9	23.1%	0	0.0%	1	2.6%
E-mail or RSS search alerts	13	32.5%	18	45.0%	8	20.0%	1	2.5%
Saved searches	10	25.0%	21	52.5%	8	20.0%	1	2.5%
Browsing inventor name, owner indexes	23	59.0%	11	28.2%	4	10.3%	1	2.6%
Filtering by year, country, etc.	19	51.4%	16	43.2%	1	2.7%	1	2.7%
Graphical display of search results	11	28.9%	18	47.4%	7	18.4%	2	5.3%

Question 8: Other comments or suggestions about patent office databases:

1. There is a growing demand for patent instruction from the engineering college. In fact in fall 2007 I provided a very crude introduction to keyword searching for patents to freshman engineering orientation course. The perception from some faculty is that with design projects at the freshman level, these students should have this instruction.
2. We recently starting subscribing to the Ei Patents databases on the Ei Village platform and we're pushing that now to students
3. which plugins are necessary for illustrative content in diff databases
4. We include patents in engineering, chemistry, etc. instruction. It's annoying to have to recommend patent sites depending on years of coverage, whether keyword or class, text vs. images, etc.
5. privacy of search is very important; also teach patents in : Industrial Design, Business - Tech Transfer; Medical Lab management course; Business Organizational Analysis
6. I use pat2pdf when I need to send a US patent to someone -- it works like a charm. Wish the USPTO did this.
7. We use pat2pdf.org a lot here.
8. A better search interface would be nice!
9. Need training classes taught by experts
10. The USPTO needs to GET RID OF that awful tiff viewer. I tell students and faculty to use USPTO to search but then retrieve the document elsewhere. I shouldn't have to do that.
11. Make the classification search tools more prominent!
12. Make USPTO search syntax more intuitive! Index pre-1976 patents!
13. I really think USPTO needs to use something other than the TIFF format, it's a really impediment for folks trying to access the images. I'm sending patrons to Google Patent more and more.
14. We have a subscription to MicroPatent and use that; hence why we don't use a lot of the other tools mentioned above. We use Google Patents the most.