PROBLEMS IN HANDLING JAPANESE PATENT INFORMATION

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Essential elements for identification of Japanese patents have been discussed and the existing citation practices in the Indian and foreign primary/secondary periodicals have been examined. Problems in handling Japanese patent information arising due to inadequacy in their citations have been highlighted with some practical examples and their solution suggested.

INTRODUCTION

Patent literature is indispensable for industrial and technological growth. In fact, it can be a true index of the technological advancement of a nation. In this connection USA, UK, France and Japan can be mentioned. The impact of patent literature on Japan's industrial progress within the last two decades has been remarkable. In 1960, Japan was importing technology having the import/export ratio 100 to 2.5. In 1975, this ratio became 100 to 22.5. Now, Japan is exporting technology to industrially advanced countries and for the first time in 100 years, America's lead in technology is being challenged by her. At present Japan accounts for 10.6% of the World's Gross National Product[1].

Patents are important not only for the development of the national economy but also for the international exchange of technology, products, services etc. Therefore, patents also promote international trade and technological developments. Japan holds about 10% of the total patents registered overseas and is one of the leading foreign holders of US patents. Japan issues 300,000 patents every year[2, 3].

Nowadays, patent literature has become an important part of every scientific and technical or industrial library. In many libraries, particularly those, situated in companies engaged in product development, the collection of patent literature gets priority over periodicals, reports, books, etc. Authors experience a member of difficulties in handling the Japanese patent information. Some of them are discussed below. The main objective of this paper is to bring these problems to the notice of librarians/information scientists, editors, user scientists, etc.

JAPANESE PATENTS

Since 1950, Japan is issuing two series of patents, i.e. the examined patent applications (Japan Tokkyo Koho) and unexamined patent applications (Japan Kokai Tokkyo Koho). Each series of the patent applications is numbered every year starting from No. 1 and year is given in Showa (Current Japanese era).

PROBLEMS IN HANDLING JAPANESE PATENT INFORMATION

Patents from all the countries pose such common problems as patentese, patenting procedure, language barrier, restriction in use, difficulty in accessibility and less coverage in indexing and abstracting services. However, handling of Japanese patents, specially because of language barrier, poses some typical problems discussed below.

Indexing of Japanese Patents

Here, indexing means the recording of bibliographical data on the index cards etc. for maintaining the record of patent holdings for retrospective search of information. It generally includes the name of the patentee and the inventor, the title, the number and the year of patent and the country of its origin. Generally, the patent number is most important because it is an invariable tag. In the case of Japanese
patents, the type of patent application, the patent number and the year of patenting are equally important and these three elements constitute the invariable tag for their identification. As discussed above, every year two patents are generally issued with the same patent number. However, they may be on the same or on different subjects. For example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patent Number</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title of the patent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47298</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Explosive with high stability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47298</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from this that one may not get the required patent if only the patent number is used as search term.

To have complete information, the Japanese patents must be indexed in the following way:

1. Name of patentee
2. Title of the patent
3. Type of patent application
4. Year of the patent in Showa
5. Patent number
6. Date, month and year of the patent according to Christian era
7. No. of pages.

However most of the indexing services do not include all the essential elements discussed above.

Filing of Japanese Patents

As is well-known, patents are usually filed in numerical order under the country of origin but the filing of Japanese patents is a little different from the other patents due to the reasons mentioned above. The Japanese patents are filed in Japan in the first instance according to the type of patent applications i.e. Japan Tokkyo Koho or Japan Kokai Tokkyo Koho, then according to the year of patent followed by the patent number.

Citation of Japanese Patents in Primary and Secondary Periodicals

The primary purpose of citation is to identify the document referred to therein. If the citation of the document is wrong, the purpose of citation is defeated. Therefore, one should be very careful while citing a document in the primary or secondary periodicals because these periodicals are used by a large number of scientists.

Patents are generally identified by their patent numbers; but, for identifying Japanese patents some more information discussed above is required. However, citations of the Japanese patents in many periodicals are found incomplete in this respect.

(i) Citation in Indian Periodicals

In India, the citations of Japanese patents in primary and secondary periodicals are either incomplete or sometimes wrong. To illustrate this fact, the authors have selected some examples of Japanese patent citations from primary and secondary periodicals published in India as given below:

Some Examples from the National Index of Translations (Secondary Periodical)

NIT is a national index of translations and all the Japanese patents translated throughout India are announced in this index. It shows the indexing and citation practices followed by various libraries and information centres in India.

Japanese Patent 52-42789  
Japanese Patent 48-54098  
Japanese Patent 50-9449

In the above mentioned examples, the types of patent application are not recorded, and so one cannot say whether a particular patent belongs to the examined or unexamined patent applications.
Examples from Primary Periodicals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of the Periodical</th>
<th>Cited on page</th>
<th>Form of citation</th>
<th>Correct form of citation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Journal of Indian Chemical Society, Vol. 59, Aug. 1982</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>Japan Kokai 1971-73, 10,046</td>
<td>This number seems to be wrong because it is too long.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Foreign Periodicals

The citation of Japanese patents in primary and secondary publications at international level appears to be unsatisfactory. The citations in some of the secondary services, for example, Chemical Abstracts, include all the elements necessary for their identification, while in other publications, for example, World Transindex, World Surface Coating Abstracts etc., the citations are incomplete. To illustrate this fact, the authors have selected World Transindex as an example, because all the Japanese patents translated throughout the world are announced in this publication with the cooperation of various national agencies. This publication, therefore, can give some idea about the indexing and citation practices followed by various agencies in different countries. Some examples from the World Transindex are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Citations of Japanese Patents</th>
<th>Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>JPN, (1978), JP/53-35334</td>
<td>British Library Lending Division (BLLD) : 8052-98 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>JPN, (1982-1-08), JP/57-2699</td>
<td>Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) E 4073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>JPN, (s.d), JP/54-149951</td>
<td>IFP: U 044, 27, 00 FF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the above mentioned examples, the types of patent application have not been recorded. This type of citation does not indicate whether the patent in question belongs to the examined or unexamined series. The International Translations Centre cites the year of the patent according to Christian Era as mentioned in example number 1, while others cite in Showa and according to the Christian Era as shown in other examples.

(iii) In Derwent Publications

An example of citation of Japanese patent from the Japanese Patents Report published by Derwent Publications Ltd., London is given below

J8 2060895
(1)

Di-basic acid bisglycerol esters as emulsifying agents:

Abstract of the patent
(2)

(J55062046)
(3)

In this publication, in each entry of patent abstract, the number of the examined patent is cited on the top right corner (1) and then full title of the patent (2) is followed by the abstract, IPC code number etc. At the end of the abstract, the number of unexamined Japanese patent (3) is cited. In the case of the number of the examined Japanese patent, the year of patent is cited according to Christian era i.e. (82), while the year in the case of unexamined patent number is cited in Showa i.e. (55). In examined patent number, there is space between 8 and 2. In fact this space should come between the year and the patent number, for example, J82 060895. This space between 8 and 2 may create confusion in finding out the actual patent number. In unexamined patent number, neither space nor dash is given to separate the year and the patent number.

Acquisition of Japanese Patents

Incomplete or wrong citations create problems in the acquisition of Japanese patents. Generally, non-Japanese patents are procured by giving correct patent number in the procurement order. But Japanese patents cannot be procured correctly by giving only the patent number. Besides the patent number, the type of the patent application and its year are equally important. If any of these three essential elements is missing, there is risk of getting a wrong document.

The authors came across some such cases while handling Japanese patents. One of these cases of wrongly procured patent is given below

In this case, the indentor was interested in the former patent but he got the latter. It was identified only when it had already been translated.

The Japanese patents can be procured from HATSU-MEI-KYOKAI (Japan Institute of Invention and Innovation), 9-14 Taranomochome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105, Japan. The order must specify Japan Kokai Tokkyo Koho for unexamined applications and Japan Tokkyo Koho for examined applications. Besides the type of patent applications, the number of patent, the year of patent and complete title of the patent must be mentioned in the order form. The year of the patent prefixed to its number should be represented in SHOWA as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patent No.</th>
<th>Type of Patent application</th>
<th>Year of patent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47,298</td>
<td>Japan Kokai Tokkyo Koho</td>
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<td>Japan Tokkyo Koho</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
given in the original patent. For example, Patent No. 80-47298 should be ordered as 55-47298.

IDENTIFICATION OF JAPANESE PATENTS

In order to avoid language barrier, Japanese patent office has started giving the country code prepared by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the kind codes derived from the codes of Permanent Committee on Patent Information (PCPI) and the year according to Christian era on the patent for identification of country, type of applications and the year respectively [4]. Japanese patent office gives (JP) as the country code and (A) for Kokai Tokkyo Koho and (B) for Tokkyo Koho as kind codes on the top of the patent. In the patent index of Chemical Abstracts, (A2) is used for (A) series and (B2) is used for (B) series. The year of patent and the patent number are given together. Therefore one may take the whole number as patent number but it is not correct. First two digits represent the year of the patent and the rest - the number of the patent. For example,

Japan Tokkyo Koho 52 4062 (1) (2) (3)

Here (1), (2) and (3) refer to the type of application, year and patent number respectively. “SHOWA” 52 corresponds to 1977 in Christian era.

CONCLUSION

The examination of citation practices in various Indian and foreign primary and secondary periodicals reveals that the information given in the bibliographic entries or citations in respect of Japanese patents is inadequate for their correct identification, retrieval, procurement etc. Patent number, type of patent application and year form an invariable tag for correct identification of Japanese patents because of their two series and renumbering of each series every year from No. 1. Therefore, it becomes evident that these elements should be included in the citations.

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REFERENCES