

Patent Search Tutorial and Strategies

For patent searches, you will be using the United States Patent and Trademark Office's (USPTO) online patent database.

Link: <http://patft.uspto.gov/netahtml/PTO/search-adv.htm>

This database contains all of the **issued** patents between 1790-Present, there is a separate database for patent applications, but we do not use it as we do not consider candidates with only patent applications, patents pending, provisional patents, etc. We deal solely with issued U.S. patents.

On the home page, you'll notice the Query box, which is where you'll type in what you're looking for, the Select Years drop down box, which lets you choose the year range of your patent search. You have two options; 1976-Present or 1790-Present, which is also the entire patent database and is only searchable by the specific patent number, issue date or current classification. You will mostly deal with the 1976-Present selection, so leave that as a default. You will also notice the red tabs at the top of the page, those will lead you to other areas of the USPTO's web page, so they're not of much use here. To the right of the box are some example query inputs.

[USPTO PATENT FULL-TEXT AND IMAGE DATABASE](#)

[Home](#) [Quick](#) [Advanced](#) [Pat Num](#) [Help](#)

[View Cart](#)

Data current through April 21, 2015..

Query [\[Help\]](#)

Examples:
ttl/(tennis and (racquet or racket))
isd/1/8/2002 and motorcycle
in/newmar-julie

Select Years [\[Help\]](#)

1976 to present [full-text] ▼

Below the query box is a table of field codes, these field codes are what the database uses to determine what content you looking for, i.e. name, date, city, state, patent number, title, etc. The main field code you will use is IN which is inventor name.

Other field codes you will mostly use include:

IS = inventor state, the state which the inventor was in when the patent was issued

AN = assignee name, the name of the institution or organization that the inventor worked for or was affiliated with when the patent was issued.

PN = patent number, you will enter the specific, 7-digit patent number, this will yield only one result per number.

Field Code	Field Name	Field Code	Field Name
PN	Patent Number	IN	Inventor Name
ISD	Issue Date	IC	Inventor City
TTL	Title	IS	Inventor State
ABST	Abstract	ICN	Inventor Country
ACLM	Claim(s)	AANM	Applicant Name
SPEC	Description/Specification	AACI	Applicant City
CCL	Current US Classification	AAST	Applicant State
CPC	Current CPC Classification	AACO	Applicant Country
CPCL	Current CPC Classification Class	AAAT	Applicant Type
ICL	International Classification	LREP	Attorney or Agent
APN	Application Serial Number	AN	Assignee Name
APD	Application Date	AC	Assignee City
APT	Application Type	AS	Assignee State
GOVT	Government Interest	ACN	Assignee Country
F MID	Patent Family ID	EXP	Primary Examiner
PARN	Parent Case Information	EXA	Assistant Examiner
RLAP	Related US App. Data	REF	Referenced By
RLFD	Related Application Filing Date	FREF	Foreign References
PRIR	Foreign Priority	OREF	Other References
PRAD	Priority Filing Date	COFC	Certificate of Correction
PCT	PCT Information	REEX	Re-Examination Certificate
PTAD	PCT Filing Date	PTAB	PTAB Trial Certificate
PT3D	PCT 371c124 Date	SEC	Supplemental Exam Certificate
PPPD	Prior Published Document Date	ILRN	International Registration Number
REIS	Reissue Data	ILRD	International Registration Date
RPAF	Reissued Patent Application Filing Date	ILFD	International Filing Date
AFFF	130(b) Affirmation Flag	ILPD	International Registration Publication Date
AFFT	130(b) Affirmation Statement		

Let's use the name John Smith as an example.

You input names in the query like this:

IN/Last-Suffix-First-M

So for John Smith, the query will look like

IN/Smith-John

Since John Smith has no middle initial or suffix (i.e. Jr., III) we will leave those out.

These are the first 10 results of the name John Smith. Notice the patent number is listed to the left and the title to the right, patents list themselves with the most recently issued first. Patent numbers are assigned a unique 7-digit number when they are issued.

Searching US Patent Collection...

Results of Search in US Patent Collection db for:

IN/Smith-John: 52 patents.

Hits 1 through 50 out of 52

Final 2 Hits

Jump To

Refine Search

IN/Smith-John

	PAT. NO.	Title
1	8.618.798	Enhancing signals
2	8.574.000	Network cable assembly and protective sleeve thereof
3	8.529.284	Connector locking assembly
4	8.157.995	Systems for treating water using iron
5	8.088.441	Direct digital printing methods for textiles
6	8.010.936	System and method for describing method process using guided architectural decisions
7	7.933.689	Method for controlling at least one load connected to a primary and a backup power supply
8	7.897.049	Methods for treating water using iron
9	7.824.738	Coatings for turbine blades
10	7.720.576	Intelligent auxiliary power supply system with current and temperature monitoring capabilities

This is the first result of the patent. First you see the patent number along with the issue date, next you see *Smith, John* (London, GB), the database will *italicize* the results you search for. Here we see that this particular John Smith was in London, England when the patent was issued and his assignee was King's College London.

(1 of 52)

United States Patent
Somasundaram , et al.

8,618,798
December 31, 2013

Enhancing signals

Abstract

A method of testing a sample comprising the steps of: applying an excitation to the sample; detecting a response signal from the sample; processing a first part and a second part of the response signal; and determining from the second part of the response signal information with which to enhance the first part of the response signal.

Inventors: Somasundaram; Samuel (Bookham, GB), Jakobsson; Andreas (Sodra Sandby, SE), Rowe; Michael (London, GB), *Smith; John* (London, GB), Butt; Naveed Razzaq (Lund, SE), Gudmundson; Erik (Stockholm, SE), Althoefer; Kaspar (London, GB)

Applicant:	Name	City	State	Country	Type
	Somasundaram; Samuel	Bookham	N/A	GB	
	Jakobsson; Andreas	Sodra Sandby	N/A	SE	
	Rowe; Michael	London	N/A	GB	
	Smith; John	London	N/A	GB	
	Butt; Naveed Razzaq	Lund	N/A	SE	
	Gudmundson; Erik	Stockholm	N/A	SE	
	Althoefer; Kaspar	London	N/A	GB	

Assignee: King's College London (London, GB)

Family ID: 39386936

Appl. No.: 12/935,202

Filed: March 27, 2009

PCT Filed: March 27, 2009

PCT No.: PCT/GB2009/000803

**371(c)(1),(2),(4)
Date:** May 16, 2011

PCT Pub. No.: WO2009/118530

PCT Pub. Date: October 01, 2009

The other names are co-inventors of that patent and all get equal credit for the patent.

So let's say we want to find a John R. Smith, we would input

IN/Smith-John-R

It should look something like this, keep in mind that patents are being issued every day and the database updates with new patents every so often.

Searching US Patent Collection...

Results of Search in US Patent Collection db for:

IN/Smith-John-R: 101 patents.

Hits 1 through 50 out of 101

Next 50 Hits

Jump To

Refine Search

IN/Smith-John-R

PAT. NO.	Title
1 9,002,069	Social media event detection and content-based retrieval
2 8,972,374	Content acquisition system and method of implementation
3 8,798,402	Using near-duplicate video frames to analyze, classify, track, and visualize evolution and fitness of videos
4 8,798,400	Using near-duplicate video frames to analyze, classify, track, and visualize evolution and fitness of videos
5 8,673,152	Methods for polishing wastewater utilizing a bed of commingled bauxite residue and iron filings
6 8,370,869	Video description system and method
7 8,326,665	System and method for using a component business model to organize an enterprise
8 8,265,977	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
9 8,206,586	Systems for polishing wastewater utilizing natural media filtration
10 8,171,226	Method and apparatus for execution of a process

One thing to know about the database is that it is very word specific. When we input John Smith, it is literally looking for first name John and last name Smith and nothing else, when we put in John R. Smith the database literally looks for first name John, Middle name R., and last name Smith.

So each of the queries below...

IN/Smith-John

IN/Smith-John-R

IN/Smith-John-Robert

...will yield entirely different results.

So let's take a look at secondary and tertiary (etc.) search terms. First thing we need to know are the quick operators used to connect search terms:

OR: uses one or more terms in the results

AND: specifically uses both terms in the results

ANDNOT: specifically excludes terms in results

Let's say that we now know John R. Smith is in the state of Florida.

The search input will be:

IN/Smith-John-R AND IS/FL

*State searches are in the two letter abbreviation as are other countries.

(1 of 1)

United States Patent
Smith

6,991,010
January 31, 2006

Log splitting head for bundlewood production

Abstract

A splitting head for a log splitting apparatus includes abutting primary and secondary splitting assemblies, each having a circular securing ring that holds wedge members having cutting edges directed toward the log. The cutting edges of the secondary assembly split into smaller pieces the pieces produced by the primary assembly, producing a bundle of elongated pieces of firewood in parallel array and wherein the center of the bundle has not been compressed.

Inventors: *Smith; John R.* (Pompano Beach, FL)
Family ID: 35694715
Appl. No.: 11/133,733
Filed: May 23, 2005

Current U.S. Class: 144/193.2; 144/195.8; 254/104
Current CPC Class: B27L 7/06 (20130101)
Current International Class: B27L 7/00 (20060101)
Field of Search: ;144/193.1,193.2,195.4,195.8,195.1,195.7,195.9 ;254/104

This yielded only one result. Notice how the name and the state are italicized, as those are the search terms we used.

Now let's say that we know John R. Smith used to work in Georgia and we want to include that in our results.

The input will be:

IN/Smith-John-R AND (IS/FL OR GA)

*the parenthesis are to ensure that “OR GA” stays with the “IS/FL” search term, sometimes the database will interpret that differently than you want it to.

Results of Search in US Patent Collection db for:
(IN/Smith-John-R AND (IS/FL OR GA)): 12 patents.
Hits 1 through 12 out of 12

Jump To

Refine Search

PAT. NO.	Title
1 8.972.374	Content acquisition system and method of implementation
2 8.265.977	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
3 8.046.251	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
4 7.818.329	Method and apparatus for automatic multimedia narrative enrichment
5 7.562.059	Development of electronic employee selection systems and methods
6 7.558.767	Development of electronic employee selection systems and methods
7 7.310.626	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
8 7.080.057	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
9 6.991.010	Log splitting head for bundlewood production
10 6.222.469	Synchro-to-digital conversion with windowed peak determination
11 6.075.472	Synchro-to-digital conversion with windowed peak determination
12 4.151.319	Method for making a pressure sensitive adhesive coated laminate

This yielded more results than before.

Let’s say that looking through the patents, you find the a particular John Smith has patent under the names John R. Smith and John Robert Smith and that you want to have all of the results included in one page.

You can use the dollar sign (\$) as a wildcard symbol, meaning it will look for any result with the search you gave. For example,

IN/Smith-John-R\$ would yield

Smith, John R.

Smith, John Robert

Smith, John Reginald

Smith, John Richard

Etc.

IN/Smith-John\$, would yield

Smith, John

Smith, John Paul

Smith, John Joseph

Smith, John Edward

Etc.

In the first search we specified that the middle initial started with "R" so it looked for all John Smiths with a middle name or initial that started with "R".

In the second search we only specified the first and last name, John Smith, so the database included all results that had first and last name John Smith.

So we want to find all of the results for John Robert smith that are in the states of Florida and Georgia.

The input will be:

IN/Smith-John\$ and (IS/FL or GA)

Results of Search in US Patent Collection db for:
(IN/Smith-John\$ AND (IS/FL OR GA)): 49 patents.
Hits 1 through 49 out of 49

Jump To

Refine Search

PAT. NO.	Title
1 8.973.300	Trap for crawling insects
2 8.972.374	Content acquisition system and method of implementation
3 8.918.927	Multiple piece shower stall
4 8.265.977	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
5 8.046.251	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
6 8.020.494	Anti-roll back assembly with linear magnetic positioning
7 7.856.410	Simulation enabled retail management tutorial system
8 7.837.566	Passenger restraint system
9 7.821.675	Methods and ink compositions for invisibly printed security images having multiple authentication features
10 7.818.329	Method and apparatus for automatic multimedia narrative enrichment

Be careful, as this will include many other results, for more specific results, it's best to use

IN/Smith-John-R\$ and (IS/FL or GA)

Let's say you find a result for a John R. Smith in Texas, but you know that he has never been in Texas and want to exclude it from the results.

The input would be:

IN/Smith-John-R\$ and (IS/FL OR GA) ANDNOT IS/TX

Results of Search in US Patent Collection db for:
((IN/Smith-John\$ AND (IS/FL OR GA)) ANDNOT IS/TX): 48 patents.
Hits 1 through 48 out of 48

Jump To

Refine Search

PAT. NO.	Title
1 8.973.300	Trap for crawling insects
2 8.972.374	Content acquisition system and method of implementation
3 8.918.927	Multiple piece shower stall
4 8.265.977	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
5 8.046.251	Electronic employee selection systems and methods
6 8.020.494	Anti-roll back assembly with linear magnetic positioning
7 7.856.410	Simulation enabled retail management tutorial system
8 7.837.566	Passenger restraint system
9 7.821.675	Methods and ink compositions for invisibly printed security images having multiple authentication features
10 7.818.329	Method and apparatus for automatic multimedia narrative enrichment

Now let's say that we are looking for another John Smith but we know that he works at Brown University. Brown would most likely be the assignee name because most inventors have their institution pay for the patent application fee and in return the university gets a portion of whatever money is made from the invention.

The search should be:

IN/Smith-John and AN/Brown-University

*You use hyphens for all spaces in the assignee name, title, abstract, etc.

You can also the wildcard symbol for the assignee name or any other search term and you can use it more than once in a search.

IN/Smith-John\$ and AN/Brown-University\$

Some tips for your search:

- It is a good idea to look up the person you're searching prior to looking up their patents to get an idea of where they are and where they used to work, companies, etc.
- Always try to find their curriculum vitae or CV, essentially it is a resume for people in academia, it contains all of their school and work history along with any publications, awards or other items. Their CV may or may not contain their patents for you to compare to the USPTO database, but it should have their work history for you to use in your search,
- If a person claims they have or are on a patent but the USPTO database says otherwise, go with the database, it is more official than someone's claims.
- There will most likely be a case where a patent has misspelled a person's name (this happens more often than you think it should), if you can verify this be sure to have it included in the search results.
- As a general rule, if the inventor and assignee city do not match, but the states do, then we will count that as their patent.