



## Message from the Director

**Q. Todd Dickinson**

Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

Never before has the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) played such a central role in the economic prosperity of our Nation. Continuing our transformation from an agency viewed by some as a sleepy backwater bureaucracy into a key player in the new economy, the work we do is at the cutting edge of technology. Over and over again, the discoveries, inventions, and innovations we are called upon to examine and protect call for expertise that only the USPTO can provide.

Indeed, there were many exciting developments in the world of intellectual property this past year. Each presented a unique challenge as we worked hard to adapt to an increased workload, new technologies, and the realities of the global marketplace.

Biotechnology industries realized the mapping of the human genome, breakthrough advances in nanotechnology and combinatorial chemistry were seen, software industries witnessed the amazing growth of the Internet, and the rapid development of e-commerce created a dramatic surge in trademark applications. In fact, the first year of the 21st century firmly established what we had already suspected: ideas have truly become the coin of the realm, the currency of our accomplishments, and perhaps most importantly, an opportunity for our intellectual property system to demonstrate its flexibility, progressive nature, and strength.

Unquestionably, the USPTO answered this challenge.

Unquestionably, the USPTO answered this challenge. By maximizing our resources, pushing for enhanced automation, and pursuing global protection and cooperation, we have demonstrated that growth and technology are key factors in our continued success. We saw a rise in customer and employee satisfaction, increased patent and trademark filings, a reduction in pendency, a dramatic decrease in the backlog of interference cases, a successful resolution to our long-term space needs, and an increase in new workforce hires who are both highly skilled and representative of America's rich diversity.

A large measure of this success was due to important advances in intellectual property policy. Passage of the American Inventors Protection Act (AIPA) was an important step toward modernizing and harmonizing our patent system with the rest of the world. Working with Congress, independent inventors, and the private sector, we helped achieve the most significant reform of the patent system since 1952, resulting in a USPTO well equipped to respond to customer and employee needs. Our new status as a Performance-Based Organization also gives us the ability to operate more like a business, while maintaining our historic role as advocate and protector of inventors' rights.

Long ago, we recognized that full automation of our operations and keeping pace with new information technology was a necessity if we were to maintain our productivity and serve our customers. This past year saw

the culmination of years of careful planning and investment with the electronic filing for patent and trademark applications, new and expanded search tools for our examiners, payment options over the Internet, and improved access to prior art.

Such hard-won achievements would mean little, of course, without an equally strong commitment to protecting intellectual property rights globally. Our international activities were unparalleled as we partnered with numerous national intellectual property offices and intergovernmental organizations. The resulting technical assistance programs, symposia, training exchanges, and educational outreach have given us the ability to effect real change in intellectual property rights enforcement in the global marketplace.

Our strategy in fiscal year 2000 was clear. Through a commitment to customer and employee satisfaction, a swift response to new policies and new technologies, and an abiding belief in the need for truly universal intellectual property protection, we have aimed to make the USPTO an important force in fueling the continued economic growth and prosperity in America. Undoubtedly, the future will present its own set of challenges and opportunities. It is never an easy task to manage the seemingly endless intangibles that demand instant response but, as the saying goes, "talent will win out." I am confident that in the years

ahead, the USPTO will play an integral part in bringing even greater gifts to our Nation and to the world.

... the discoveries, inventions, and innovations we are called upon to examine and protect call for expertise that only the USPTO can provide.