

Electronic searches and paper searches provide overlapping-but-distinct, qualitatively different kinds of search capability. In my own work, I frequently find that an electronic search does not yield the very best prior art. The electronic search usually gets me to the right subclass or library shelf, but roughly half the time the truly best prior art that makes the case for me is on the same shelf, or same shoe, but would have been missed if I had not followed up the electronic search with a manual search.

The figures provide a search mechanism that simply cannot be duplicated electronically, at least not with today's technologies and IP bandwidths.

Based on my experience, both missions of the patent Office -- good examination of patent applications and providing a searchable library to attorneys and engineers -- would be seriously compromised if paper files are not made fully available to both examiners and the public.

David Boundy

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Thank you.