

Message from the Director



Q. Todd Dickinson
Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

This, the last Annual Report of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office of the 20th Century, comes at a time of incredible innovation, creativity, and a global explosion of technology, and we at the USPTO are in the middle of this exciting era. When Commissioner Charles Duell stated in his 1899 Annual Report, the last of the 19th Century, that the Nation's "future progress and prosperity depend on our ability to equal, if not surpass, other nations in the enlargement and advance of science, industry, and commerce," he could just as easily have been talking about our challenge for the 21st Century. His conclusion, that we must turn to invention to accomplish this, is our conclusion, as well.

The mission of the USPTO is to administer the laws relevant to the granting of patents and the registering of trademarks, and to advise the Executive Branch on intellectual property protection. The past year has been a particularly exhilarating time to be involved in such

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1,103,503.

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work, and we can take pride in a number of significant achievements. One of the most important is the continued transformation of the USPTO into an electronic office. The full implementation of TEAS, the trademark electronic application system, a successful launch of the Patents Electronic Filing System pilot, websites devoted to independent inventors and kids, and the enhancement of search systems and tools, are only some of the most obvious accomplishments in moving toward an electronic workplace.

All of this has occurred, of course, against the backdrop of a pronounced increase in our work, both what is coming in the door and what is going out. In FY 1999, we received more than 272,000 patent applications and 297,000 trademark applications in all classes, which represent a 13% and a 27% increase over FY 1998, respectively. We granted more than 145,000 patents and registered almost 88,000 trademarks. And to address this increased demand on our human resources, we hired more than 1,200 new employees, including 800 patent examiners.

Additionally, shortly after the end of the fiscal year, Congress passed landmark

reforms to the patent law, including the creation of the USPTO as a Performance-Based Organization and granting us wide-ranging autonomy to manage its budgetary, managerial, and personnel matters. Clearly, these changes will have a major impact on our ability to develop a first-rate business-like operation.

I am confident that, much as Commissioner Duell felt that the dawning 20th Century presented a major opportunity for the U.S. patent system to underpin American industrial competitiveness, the 21st Century presents the challenge and opportunity for the USPTO to excel at our core mission, the protection of intellectual property in a truly global environment.

Sincerely,



Q. Todd Dickinson
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Intellectual Property and
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