Issue 60 www.wrti.org.uk

Inventique©

The newsletter of Wessex Round Table of Inventors November 2005

14-20 November ENTERPRISE WEEK www.starttalkingideas.org

Next WRTI meeting
WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER
Guest speaker Richard Hicks will talk about his Pedalite invention. Room HC 017, Herbert Collins Building, Southampton Solent University, commencing at 6.30pm. Guests welcome. Refreshments available from 6pm.
● ***www.pedalite.com***
ww.wrti.org.uk/events
Map: www.streetmap.co.uk (SO14 0RP)

Portsmouth Technopole gives companies space

PORTSMOUTH TECHNOPOLE, the spectacular innovation centre at the gateway to the City of Portsmouth, has attracted a steady flow of innovative start-up companies to the region.

"The Technopole is part of a network of twelve innovation centres managed by Oxford Innovation housing over 250 entrepreneurial businesses," said Dr David Kingham, Chief Executive of Oxford Innovation Ltd.

"Research shows that start-up companies using our innovation centres have a much greater chance of success – a survival rate of 89% over the crucial first two years, substantially better than the UK average."

The Technopole, which is part of the Solent Enterprise Hub, also helps companies raise finance through their advice service for R&D Grants, and via the Solent Investment Opportunity Network – a group of business angel investors that provides capital of up to £1m to back early-stage ventures.

● **www.oxin.co.uk/portsmouth**

New Patent Office service is launched

OPINIONS PROCEDURE HELPS AVOID LITIGATION

The Patent Office has launched a ground-breaking new opinions service – a procedure which allows anyone to ask the Patent Office for an expert opinion on issues of patent infringement or validity, *writes James Porter.*

The opinions service will help parties test the strength of their arguments at the Patent Office before (or instead of) resorting to expensive litigation. It is designed so that both parties in a dispute can have their say before the opinion is issued.

The Patent Office consulted with a wide spectrum of users of the patents system to clarify the procedures of the new service.

"We are delighted to offer this innovative new service – it is a genuine first for the UK Patent Office," said Sean Dennehey, Director of Patents. "It provides a quick, low–cost option for parties who wish to receive an impartial assessment of the issues involved in a dispute. I'm also very pleased that our users have played such a constructive part in shaping the procedures."

"The opinions service is an important new tool for innovative businesses – both large and small," said Lord Sainsbury, Minister for Science & Technology. ■

● **www.patent.gov.uk**

Source: www.prowse.co.uk

PATENT OFFICE OPINIONS SERVICE

● **Anyone may request an opinion on any UK patent (or European patent which designates the UK). The fee is £200.**

● **After the request is filed, there is a short period for anyone to make observations on the request, and for the requester and patentee to make observations in reply.**

● **The opinion will be written and issued by a senior patent examiner, who will consider the arguments set out in the request, as well as any observations filed.**

● **Patent examiners are graduate scientists and engineers who are responsible for the technical and legal scrutiny of patent applications in a particular field of technology.**

Wessex Round Table of Inventors meet at 6.30pm on the second Wednesday of each month at Southampton Solent University, East Park Terrace SO14 0RP

INSIDE View from the Chair • Laura Wilson • Rosanna Cooper • Out and about • Inventors Hall of Fame etc...

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

I HAVE BEEN been involved in attending or exhibiting at trade shows and exhibitions for more years than I care to remember. Until just a few years ago, such exhibitions used to be *the* way to learn about the machines, cars, music systems, furniture – the list is endless – one was thinking about buying. And from an exhibitor's point of view, these events were much busier and more heavily attended in days gone by.

The problem – and I think it *is* a problem – is that the internet in all its glory leads people to believe that they can find out all they need to know without undertaking the necessary chore of trundling all the way to an exhibition centre.

In some cases, of course, you can – but even the internet can't tell you what you don't know you don't know (pay attention at the back).

From an inventor's point of view, of course, this quandary is the epitome of frustration. If you come up with something that you know the world would like, you need to show it off and you need people to show it off to. If your potential customers are all sitting at home none the wiser, then innovation itself is in trouble.

I'm really keen to promote exhibitions and shows as great places to discover new ideas and consider alternatives to the normal way of doing things. I was at a packaging exhibition last month, for instance, and picked up some great ideas which I'm delighted to say my company's competitors (who didn't visit) won't know about.

So if you're wondering what you don't know and haven't thought of, I do hope you took the time to visit the British Invention Show at the Alexandra Palace last month. Not only is it the UK's premier showcase of innovative talent, but by attending such events you might kick the grey matter into action and come up with an idea that could change all our lives.

Sincerely, Richard

● **Inventique reviews the BIS next month**

RICHARD LITTLE, WRTI Chairman

INVENTORATOR Laura Wilson

Famous achievers

THE LINK BETWEEN CREATIVITY AND DYSLEXIA

Continued from last month...

ARE DYSLEXICS EVENLY distributed across careers and professions? The answer is an emphatic "We don't know."

The National Probation Service found in 1996 that 52% of the prison population in London could be diagnosed as dyslexic, and a study by the British Dyslexia Association and Bradford's Youth Offending team in 2004 found a similar proportion of dyslexics among young offenders. These findings both fall far beyond what would be considered a "normal" population distribution, even if we are not sure about the true dyslexia prevalence figures.

Last year, a study by Simfonec, a science and commercialisation project based in London, suggested that up to 20% of the entrepreneurial population is dyslexic (though this may simply reflect dyslexia prevalence in the general population, if you believe the US count).

Does dyslexia drive people into certain careers? Maybe yes, maybe no – but what seems quite clear is that it may be barring some young people from legitimate and productive participation in society.

Leaps and binds

For a condition that fills our prisons and affects 20% of the population, the pace of dyslexia medical research over the last two decades could be described as somewhat ponderous. However, what has dramatically improved is the education environment for dyslexic pupils and students – with one-on-one tuition now common, statements of educational need, additional examination time and (at institutions like the University of Portsmouth) a supportive environment created by teaching staff with specialist IT and study skills support.

With the addition of a supportive family environment, there is no reason why a high proportion of dyslexic children cannot now attend university and gain a degree, and therefore entry into their careers of choice. The British Dyslexia Association's report, however, suggests that the system is still failing for many young people. Arguably, the links between dyslexia, poverty and unsupportive, dysfunctional family environments deserve greater exploration.

Does more mean less?

Does an improved educational environment necessarily mean that we will have fewer innovative, creative, artistic and entrepreneurial types contributing to our future society? I don't believe so. With exposure to higher education – an education that facilitates the appropriate framing of problems, critiques of existing methods and the confident promotion of new ideas to a wide audience – Trevor Baylis might not have been such a 'one hit wonder', Anita Roddick might not have been ousted from the board of the company she founded, and Richard Branson might never have gone into the train business.

Extrapolate these three examples to the small business population, or inventors, or the fine arts, or music, or theatre – and just imagine how different our world might look. ■

● *Laura Wilson is a senior lecturer in Entrepreneurship at the Centre for Enterprise Research and Innovation, Portsmouth Business School.*

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INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS-3

Continued from last month...

ROSANNA COOPER CLARIFIES THE LEGAL POSITION FOR INVENTORS AND ENTREPRENEURS

THE DYSON CASE represents a significant decision regarding unregistered design rights, *writes Dr Rosanna Cooper*.

A registered design is a monopoly right for the appearance of the whole or a part of a product resulting from the features of (in particular) the lines, contours, colours, shape, texture, materials of the product or its ornamentation.

For a design to be afforded protection, it must be new and have an individual character. A design is new if no identical design or designs whose features differ in immaterial details have been disclosed to the public anywhere in the world (the prior art) before the date of filing the application or the date from which priority is claimed.

However, if at least 12 months before filing an application (or claiming priority) a designer markets, promotes or exhibits his designs to gauge levels of interests, this would not amount to disclosure.

To meet the requirements of individual character, the design must produce on the informed user (who may be a may be a retail customer) a different overall impression from prior designs. The degree of freedom of a designer in creating a design is taken into account in determining whether a design has individual character. Where minor differences separate the design from the prior art then the scope of protection is limited: the public should be able to ascertain that a design is different from others that already exist.

Registration of a design would last initially for five years and be extendible by five years up to a maximum of 25 years.

To obtain a UK registered design you can apply to the Patent Office on the prescribed form.

Investors usually require a start-up business or inventor to have a design filing strategy in place, as the filing costs should be taken into account when preparing a business plan.

Trade marks

Trade marks are the badge of a business and protect any mark capable of graphical representation, which distinguishes the goods and services of a company from those of another. Trade marks include names, signatures, smells, shapes and logos.

When choosing a new trade mark, it is advisable that a company carries out the requisite trade mark searches in the UK and in all other key markets, in order to minimise the risk of infringing a third party's trade mark. Searches are therefore imperative, although the costs of trade mark searches can be significant.

Trade mark protection lasts for ten years and the registration is renewable every ten years thereafter. The registered mark must be used, preferably in the form in which it is registered, in order to avoid the risk of a cancellation action.

A company has six months from the date of filing a trade mark application (the priority date) in which to make foreign applications, otherwise the company will not retain the filing date. There have been some significant developments in trade mark law.

Investors usually ensure that a company has adequate trade mark filing strategy in place for achieving international trade mark protection. There are a number of trade mark systems available to achieve international trade mark registration, including the Madrid Protocol.

A company can only bring an infringement action when the trade mark is registered. The remedies available are the same as for patents. However, a company can also obtain damages for past infringement, which occurred before registration. ■

Continued next month

● *Dr Rosanna Cooper is a partner at RT Coopers, a commercial law firm focusing on inventors and business start-ups.*

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HUMORESQUE *from Dave Challice dchallic@bournemouth.ac.uk*

NASA WAS INTERVIEWING professionals to form the crew on a Mars mission. Only one person could be selected, and he would not return from the trip.

The first applicant, a patent attorney, was asked how much he wanted to be paid. "One million dollars," he answered. "I won't be coming back, so I wish to donate it to the Faculty of Law at my old university."

The next applicant, a scientist, was asked the same question. He requested two million dollars. "I want to give one million to my family," he explained, "and donate the rest for the advancement of medical research."

The last applicant was an inventor. When asked how much money *he* wanted, he whispered into the interviewer's ear: "Three million dollars."

"Why so much more than the others?" the NASA interviewer asked.

The inventor whispered: "One million dollars is for you. I'll keep a million. Then we give the patent attorney a million – and send HIM to Mars!"

MIT drops $100 into their laptops

A PROFESSOR AT MIT has developed a wind-up laptop computer costing only $100 which he hopes to offer to children in developing countries.

Nicholas Negroponte, co-founder and chairman of MIT's Media Lab, has been working on the laptop idea since 1999 and plans to have a working prototype ready this month.

The Linux-based, full-colour, full-screen laptop can do anything a regular laptop can do except store huge amounts of data. The bulk of the cost savings come from lowering the price of the display down to approximately $30 and streamlining the software. The wind-up computer (which can be powered from electrical outlets) also incorporates wireless internet access.

"Laptops are both a window into the world and a tool with which to think," said Mr Negroponte. "They are a wonderful way for all children to 'learn

© MIT MEDIA LAB

learning' through independent interaction and exploration."

Expressions of interest in the devices have already been received from Brazil, Egypt and Thailand, and political leaders in the USA are considering the possibility of introducing them into schools.

The non-profit One Laptop Per Child Foundation was formed in January to design and distribute the $100 computers, which will not be available to the general public. ■

● **Source: R&D magazine / MIT News**

● **THE WOODPECKER'S extraordinary ability to peck holes in solid wood at high speed has provided the inspiration for a home-improvement tool. The electric hammer devised by a team at the University of Bath uses a motor that is mounted so that it rocks about on a point in the middle of its handle to drive the head of the hammer rapidly back and forth, delivering a rapid succession of blows to its target.**

● **MUDDLED MOTORISTS who forget where they have parked their cars will soon be able to call their vehicle for help. When the voice-activated device gets the call it will reveal the car's location by sounding the horn or flashing the lights. The system, which is being developed by ATX of Irving, Texas, will also allow drivers to phone their car from bed on a cold morning and tell it to defrost the windows and start the heater.**

Source: New Scientist magazine, 15 Oct'05

DESIGNS FOR LIFE

Consumers in a Business Link Wessex study to find out what can be learned from a simple idea have named their most useful innovations.

The top ten are: lever-arm corkscrews, disposable nappies, television remote controls, car central locking, gas barbecues, push-button telephones, electric screwdrivers, electric toothbrushes, compact broadsheet newspapers and ready-tied bow ties.

Technologies such as computers, mobile phones and interactive television systems were not included in the survey.

Chris Rourke, director of User Vision, who conducted the research, said: "While major technical innovations such as computers, the internet and mobile phones have obviously revolutionised the way we do things, simple solutions to everyday problems are often overlooked when it comes to recognising innovative and usable design."

Source: www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE R&D

● AN EU INNOVATION scoreboard study comparing EU and USA performance paints a gloomy picture of Europe's ability to compete.

The report questions the EU's favoured 'linear' model of innovation, which dictates that scientific knowledge leads to technological innovation, which in turn leads to economic benefits. Technological innovations, claim the authors, sometimes precede science (where practical inventions come before scientific understanding), and scientific advances are commonly made possible by technological ones.

The paper also rejects the view that Europe is a strong performer at the initial phase of the linear model but weak at then transferring scientific knowledge into results. Strategies to address this consist of policies aimed at university-to-business technology transfer, with a general disregard for funding more speculative basic research, the report claims. Concentrating on the links between academia and industry is misguided, it says.

● THE LATEST science, technology and industry scoreboard from the OECD shows a high degree of research and development (R&D) collaboration in Europe.

Increasing numbers of companies are setting up R&D laboratories abroad, but are drawn to particular countries. In Hungary and Ireland, for example, foreign companies account for 70% of industrial R&D, but represent less than 5% in Japan. Concentration is also high (at over 40%) in the Czech Republic, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

Japan remains somewhat isolated in terms of cooperation and patenting: less than 4% of domestic inventions in Japan are owned by foreigners, compared with over 12% in the USA and 37.5% in the UK.

China has become the third-largest R&D performer with the second-largest number of researchers (862,000 in 2003) after the USA (1.3 million in 1999), but ahead of Japan (675,000).■

● **Source: R&D magazine / Cordis / EU**

INNOVATION CLINICS

Are you thinking about developing a new product or process? Have you invented something and don't know what to do next?

Through its series of free Innovation Clinics, Business Link Wessex provides confidential and impartial guidance on such subjects as investigating an innovative idea, developing a new product or process, working with universities, exploiting inventions and intellectual property rights.

Innovation clinics are held in the Bournemouth, Portsmouth and Southampton regions each Wednesday from 4pm to 6pm.

● ***Events Hotline: 08454 58 85 57***
Book online at:
www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk/events

Noble CEI appearance

WORLD LAND SPEED record holder, entrepreneur and challenger Richard Noble will talk about leadership, flat management and Thrust SSC as guest speaker at the third Aziz Corporation Annual Enterprise Lecture on Monday 14 November.

Hosted by the University of Southampton's Centre for Enterprise and Innovation and introduced by Professor Philip Nelson, the event will commence at the Turner Sims Concert Hall, Highfield, University of Southampton at 6.30pm. Admission is free. ■

● **Reservations / information: Liz Roe**
Tel: 02380 593095 info@cei.soton.ac.uk

ROYAL SOCIETY'S CALL FOR PROPOSALS

RESEARCHERS IN science and technology have a 7 November deadline to submit their proposals for the Royal Society Science Exhibition 2006.

The Royal Society selects 24 teams to appear at the exhibitions, which present scientific research to the public, potential students and funding bodies. Typically, over 4,000 visitors attend the events.

Inspirational ideas for potential exhibits can be found at www.sc1.ac.uk, which contains details of all the exhibits presented between 2001-2005.

● **For a proposal form, contact: events@royalsoc.ac.uk www.royalsoc.ac.uk/forms**

ACCESS TO FINANCE WORKSHOPS

DO YOU WISH to find out which finance options are available to your business and how to maximise your chances of securing the money you need? Would you appreciate receiving advice on managing your intellectual property or writing a business plan to attract investment? Do you need to understand what a banker or business angel looks for when reviewing a business proposal?

If so, come along to the Access to Finance Workshop at Farnborough Enterprise Hub on 22 November 2005 to hear about the key sources of finance available to your company and how you can maximise your chances of securing the money you need to succeed. ■

● ***Admission: £25 plus VAT***
Reservations contact: Holly Cartlidge
Tel: 01344 754544 mail@financesoutheast.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **ASSESSING AN INNOVATIVE IDEA**

This service helps small businesses assess their readiness to undertake a specific project relating to an innovative idea, providing an assessment of the gaps between the existing capabilities of the business or individual and the capabilities needed to undertake the project.
www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk

● **DTI TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME**

Designed to stimulate innovation in the UK economy through higher levels of research and development (R&D) and knowledge transfer, the programme comprises two products: Collaborative Research & Development, and Knowledge Transfer Networks (KTNs).

Information about KTNs is available at: **www.dti.gov.uk/ktn**

Information on open competitions for Collaborative Research and Development projects is available at: **www.dti.gov.uk/technologyprogramme/open_comps.html**

This month sees the next call for applications for these competitions. £100m is available for companies to carry out Collaborative Research and Development in:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Advanced materials
- Biopharmaceutical bioprocessing
- Emerging energy technologies
- Micro & Nanotechnology.
- Validation of complex systems
- Zero-emission enterprise.

The objective of Collaborative Research & Development is to assist industry and research communities to work together on R&D projects in science, engineering and technology, from which successful new products, processes and services can emerge. The projects must involve two or more collaborators, at least one of which is from industry.

Three categories of research are supported: applied research, experimental development, and pure or oriented basic research.

Business Link Wessex assistance is available, and the fact sheet *Competitions for funding* can be downloaded from their website.
innovation@businesslinkwessex.co.uk
www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE Inventors Hall of Fame

Three-piece suite

MUSEUM, EDUCATION CENTRE AND WORKSHOP

The National Inventors Hall of Fame in Ohio is the premier not-for-profit organisation in America dedicated to recognising, honoring and encouraging invention and creativity through its programmes. The Hall of Fame honours the men and women responsible for the great technological advances that make human, social, and economic progress possible.

Founded in 1973 by the National Council of Intellectual Property Law Associations and the US Patent and Trademark Office (in whose premises it was originally housed), the Inventors Hall of Fame was relocated to its modern, purpose-built permanent home – which also houses interactive exhibits – in 1995, with satellite offices in Washington DC and Los Angeles.

Role of honour

The Inventors Hall of Fame Museum celebrates 221 of the men and women whose patented inventions, life-saving tools, labour-saving devices and technological innovations have become the basis of the American economy and society.

New inventors are inducted into the Hall of Fame at an annual ceremony to recognise their achievements. Inventors must hold a US patent to be considered, and the invention must have contributed to the welfare of mankind and have promoted the progress of science and the useful arts.

Inside the museum, visitors can spend hours wandering through the exhibits discovering innovative genius, or explore new worlds at the Inventors Workshop.

Spreading the world

The Invent Now Studio within the Hall of Fame looks for new and creative ways to help spread the inventive spirit by developing a range of creative products, educational programmes and innovative partnerships to bring the importance of invention to the attention of society in general (including overseeing the US Patent and Trademark Office Museum).

The Hall also encourages future generations of inventors through such initiatives as Camp Invention,® Club Invention® and the Collegiate Inventors Competition.® ■

● National Inventors Hall of Fame
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Tel: +1 330 762 4463
museum@invent.org www.invent.org

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

www.eastlondoninventorsclub.com

The website of a sister club based at the University of East London. A key feature of this site is the free online forum (found by adding */inventor/modules.php?name=Forums* to the website address), which allows people to ask their inventing-related questions online and have them answered by other inventors or people interested in inventing. Regular correspondents from around the world include those in Canada and the USA, and one particular chap in Portugal for whom there is no inventors club nearby.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

How Breakthroughs Happen: the surprising truth about how companies innovate

by Andrew Hargadon
Harvard Business School Press
ISBN 1578519047 £18.99 256 pages

Did you know that the incandescent lightbulb first emerged some thirty years before Thomas Edison famously 'turned night into day'? Or that Henry Ford's revolutionary assembly line came from an unlikely blend of observations from Singer sewing machines, meatpacking, and Campbell's Soup?

In this fascinating study of innovation, engineer and social scientist Andrew Hargadon argues that our romantic notions about innovation as invention are actually undermining our ability to pursue breakthrough innovations.

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