

Georgia Tech Patent and Trademark Resource Center Annual Activities Report
2018-2019

By Lisha Li
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The Georgia Tech Library joined the Patent and Trademark Resource Center (PTRC, then Patent Depository Library) Program in 1946. Over seven decades, as the only PTRC in Georgia, we have assisted thousands of researchers, inventors and entrepreneurs, on campus and from the public, in pursuing their intellectual property (IP) protection that led to startups, products launch and business development, making economic impact in the state and beyond. Seven librarians have served as the PTRC Representative, including Safford Harris, Barbara Walker, Jean Kirkland (1982-1993), Mary-Frances Panettiere (1993-2000), Joanne Tobin (2000-2008) and Bruce Henson (2008-2010). Lisha Li is the current PTRC Representative, Patents Coordinator and patent librarian, and she has been serving in this capacity since 2010.

At the beginning of Spring 2019, Crosland Tower, one of the library buildings, opened its door to campus after two and a half years under renovation. Librarians and staff members moved back to the new building from elsewhere on campus. Students started enjoying the fresh study and collaboration spaces in the building and exploring new services that library offers. The patent consultation area is currently located on the ground floor of Crosland Tower. It will be relocated to the Price Gilbert building in 2020 when the last phase of the LibraryNext project completes.

Collaborating with the USPTO, the Georgia Tech PTRC organized the following IP Seminars, open to the campus and the public. In May 2018, we hosted “How to Obtain Free Legal Assistance on Filing Patent Applications” seminar, when John Kirkpatrick, a Patent Pro Bono Administrator and Staff Attorney, and Tara Ho, a Patent Pro Bono Assistant Coordinator at the USPTO, gave informative talks on the patent Pro Bono Program. Meredith Ragins, Executive Director, and Kelly Bray, Director of Legal Services from Georgia Patents, the non-profit firm that runs the Pro Bono Program for the states of Georgia and South Carolina, also joined the discussions. Together, they answered many specific questions from the audience about free legal assistance in patent prosecution; In July 2018, we hosted the “Trademark Basics: What Every Small Business Should Know Now, Not Later” seminar, when Craig Morris, the Managing Attorney for Trademark Educational Outreach at USPTO’s Office of the Commissioner for Trademarks, addressed issues regarding trademarks, answering questions from entrepreneurs, such as: Why should any new business select a trademark? What are the critical factors when choosing a mark? Sixty-seven people attended these highly interactive sessions and the feedback was very positive.

The PTRC Representative continued to offer the monthly Tuesday Patent Class. To meet the needs of online and distance learning students, as well as inventors and entrepreneurs in remote areas, she initiated a virtual patent class on-demand program using Blue Jeans. Over 200 people attended these on-site or online classes. The PTRC representative assisted over 300 individuals on patents and trademarks, including undergraduate students in capstone design classes, participants in CREATE-X, and InventurePrize (invention competitions with incentives), faculty and graduate students from VentureLab (a top ranking incubator that helps faculty and students create startups based on their research), patent researchers from business, economics, and public policy, as well as inventors, entrepreneurs and artists from the public.

To engage in IP education on campus, the patent librarian collaborated with teaching faculty in engineering schools, business programs, and invention competition programs on campus. For instance, the patent librarian was invited to give patent lectures to the Technological Innovation: Generating Economic Results (TiGER) Program in the College of Business in Fall 2018; the Inventing the Future education program for undergraduate students in Fall 2018; and a research methods class in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering in Spring 2019. These lectures were followed by requests from student teams on in-depth consultation related to their specific research projects.

With the administrative support, the Library was able to subscribe to InnovationQ Plus, an innovation discovery and analysis tool in the summer. The patent librarian has offered numerous training sessions on InnovationQ Plus to individual researchers and groups since then. In Oct. 2018, the PTRC also hosted an update session on InnovationQ with experts from IP.com demonstrating multiple features of the database and answering various questions from researchers.

Additionally, the patent librarian worked as a judge at the Georgia Tech Capstone Design Expo in April 2018. She also participated in the CREATE-X Startup Launch events in 2018 to meet enthusiastic student inventors and to hear about their exciting stories.

Looking forward, the Library is exploring new opportunities to provide the next level of IP and entrepreneurship support to programs on campus that help faculty and students create startups based on their research. Collaborating with the business librarians, the patent librarian is to play an important role in this endeavor.

Photo:



Tara Ho speaks at the Pro Bono Program seminar at Georgia Tech in May 2018.