Peer to Patent Summer Research Fellowship
New York Law School
Summer 2009

Background
Peer to Patent is the groundbreaking program developed by New York Law School and run in cooperation with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office, along with the assistance of a number of private stakeholders. It harnesses the power of citizen-experts to assist patent examiners by searching for, identifying, and annotating prior art relevant to pending patent applications. A first Peer to Patent pilot was launched in June 2007. During the first year the project participants (peer reviewers) assisted in the prior art searches on 40 patent applications, generating 173 items of prior art. These items of prior art were the basis of rejection in over ten of the patent applications considered. In June 2008 the pilot was continued for a second year, and was recently extended to encompass a pilot program in the United Kingdom.

Research Issue
Although Peer to Patent has attracted over 350 active peer reviewers, the project team has little or no idea as to the motivations that cause these individuals voluntarily to contribute their substantial time to the project. The average reviewer spent approximately six hours searching and annotating individual patent applications. The project team also does not fully understand the best means for attracting additional peer reviewers to the project. In order for the project to scale to larger volumes of applications, both of these points need to be understood and addressed. More generally and theoretically, the motivations of citizens in producing material for governmental use are not well-understood. This fellowship seeks to provide an account of this sort of activity, as well as generate a design for a controlled study of incentive mechanisms for these sorts of activities.

Research Activity
The selected fellow will conduct interviews among a meaningful number of currently active peer reviewers to elicit their motivations for participating in the project and contributing their time. The fellow will review the non-profit motivation literature to provide a number of alternative methods of reward to determine whether any or all of them would induce the participants to continue their participation, increase their participation, encourage others to participate, or cease their participation altogether. Potential rewards may include: (a) basic recognition; (b) monetary interest; (c) cash awards; (d) prominent public recognition; (e) some other form of reward; or (f) no reward whatsoever. The fellow will develop a survey to be conducted among a wider segment of active and potential peer reviewers to test for validation of the data gathered in the initial sampling. From the results of the initial sampling, literature review, and survey, the fellow will develop findings on which to base an incentive program to attract and retain peer reviewers. The fellow will develop an experimental design to test the efficacy of each of these incentive possibilities.

Term

The fellowship will commence on or about June 1, 2009 and will continue until on or about August 31, 2009. The fellowship is a full time position for the three months stipulated; but this is open to negotiation for an exceptional candidate.

Compensation

The fellow will receive a monthly stipend of $3,000 (based on full time work status).

Job Qualification

It is expected that the fellow will be pursuing (ABD) or have completed a PhD in psychology, economics, policy, or communications; or some other relevant field involving the motivation of content producers.

Application Deadline

April 30, 2009.

Application Procedure

Applicants should send (1) a letter of application detailing their qualification for the position, (2) a resumé, and (3) a list of three referees, to:

> Ms Naomi Allen
> Administrator, Institute for Information Law & Policy
> New York Law School
> 57 Worth Street
> New York NY 10013
> Naomi.Allen@nyls.edu

Questions relating to the scope and nature of the fellowship can be directed to:

Prof. Mark Webbink,
Director, Center for Patent Innovations
New York Law School
mhwebbink@yahoo.com

Prof. Dan Hunter
Director, Institute for Information Law & Policy
New York Law School
dhunter@nyls.edu

New York Law School is an equal opportunity employer that encourages excellence through diversity. Women and minority candidates are encouraged to apply.