Popular Patent Search Services

Each patent search service is useful for different scenarios. Below are some pointers for selecting an effective search service:

- **Google**
  - **Benefits:**
    - Easy to view text and pictures at once, for a less fatiguing search.
    - Allows searching of CPC classification codes.
    - Fast!
    - Entering a google search doesn't require knowledge of Boolean search (no need for ANDs or ORs)
  - **Drawbacks**:
    - Google only has more complicated field searching. For example, when you limit your search to the title, you have to use special query language.
    - Currently has a bug, where certain CPC codes will not work. Specifically, CPC codes having four numerical digits after the second letter and before the slash will not return results.

- **Free Patents Online (FPOL)**
  - **Benefits:**
    - works well with long boolean strings, such as: "(time or clock) and (smoke or tobacco or cigar*)"
    - has a proximity operator "cigarette quit"~4
  - **Drawbacks**:
    - does not use CPC classification
- **USPTO**
  - **Benefits:**
    - USPTO is up to date, and so it works very well for pulling in full classifications (both applications and patents). It's also very quick when submitting a full classification.
  - **Drawbacks**:
    - There is no OCR of old patents, so text searching only works back to 1972
    - long text searches (more than a few terms) will take long periods of time, and will sometimes cause the search service to hang up.
    - Images are on a second page, so lots of clicking to see both text and images.

- **European Patent Office Espacenet**
  - **Benefits:**
    - Can get both US and International patents
  - **Drawbacks**:
    - Buggy

The following table lists the features available in each search service.

	Google	**FPOL**	**USPTO**	**Espacenet**
US Patent Classification		X	X	
International Patent Classification		X	X	X
Cooperative Patent Classification	X		X	X
Multiple Classifications	X	X	X	X
Long Keyword Strings (more than five terms)	X	X		
Retrieve all Patents and Apps in a single class		X	X	
International	X	X		X
Proximity Operator	X	X		