



Community and Identity Transformed: An Analysis of the Patent Genre from Paper to Digital Environments

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A Patent Is...

“A right, granted by government, to exclude others from making, using, or selling [an] invention” within a country

Canadian Intellectual Property Office, “What is a Patent?”
http://www.cipo.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/h_wr00001.html



The Patents System

- Balances commercial monopoly with dissemination of information
- Aims to strengthen a nation's economy
- Largely geared towards business community



Patents and the Medical Community

- Patents on medical advances viewed unfavourably among doctors and surgeons
- Different ethical stance from business community: innovation always for greater good



The Discovery of Insulin

- Revolutionary medicinal achievement in the treatment of diabetes
- Primary members of research team: Frederick Banting, Charles Best, James Collip, and J.J.R. Macleod
- Issue of patents played a key role



The Insulin Committee Fonds at the University of Toronto

- Extensive contextualising materials
- Transformation of paper records into digital representations



Insulin Timeline

- 1869: islets of Langerhans
- 1889: pancreas identified as source of problem
- 1901-1920: multiple unsuccessful attempts to extract islets' hormone
- 1921: Banting and Best begin experiments
- 1922: Collip improves the purification process; the first safe and effective injection of insulin is administered to a patient



JANUARY 25th 1922.

MEMORANDUM IN REFERENCE TO THE CO-OPERATION OF THE CONNAUGHT ANTITOXIN LABORATORIES IN THE RESEARCHES BY DR. BANTING, MR. BEST AND DR. COLLIP UNDER THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF PROFESSOR J. J. R. MACLEOD TO OBTAIN AN EXTRACT OF PANCREAS HAVING A SPECIFIC EFFECT ON THE BLOOD SUGAR CONCENTRATION.

The Connaught Antitoxin Laboratories will co-operate under the following conditions with the above mentioned workers:-

1. Dr. Banting, Mr. Best and Dr. Collip each agrees not to take any steps which would result in the process of obtaining an extract or extracts of pancreas, being patented, prepared by any commercial firm with the aid of any of the above or otherwise exploited during the period of co-operation of the Connaught Antitoxin Laboratories.

2. That no step involving any modification in policy concerning these researches be taken without preliminary joint conference between Dr. Banting, Mr. Best and Dr. Collip, and Professor MacLeod and Professor FitzGerald being held.

The Connaught Antitoxin Laboratories is prepared in the Antitoxin Division under the above conditions to extend facilities and financial support as follows:-

1. Until the merit or otherwise of the extract has been determined by combined clinical and laboratory investigations; to pay the salaries of technical assistants and helpers not to exceed four (4) in number for a period of at least four (4) months to carry on the work of extract or extracts production on a suitable scale.

January 1922

A watershed moment?

InterPARES
Trust



A Negotiation of the Patents System

- Selling of patent rights for a \$1
- Whose name goes on the patent application?
- Does the patent list all possibilities?
- Product as well as process?
- Trademark
- Justification



The Analogue Experience

- Context for patent application is diffuse; scattered across files
- Supplemental material gives most meaning
- Correspondence, meeting minutes, draft copies



The Digital Experience

- Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO) Patents Database:
 - Patent documents only: no supplemental/ contextualising materials



- Retrieval via keyword search is problematic

The screenshot shows the CIPO website interface. At the top, there is a header with the Canadian flag, the text "Canadian Intellectual Property Office" and "Office de la propriété intellectuelle du Canada", and the "Canada" logo. Below this is a green banner with a red maple leaf and the text "Canadian Intellectual Property Office" and "cipo.ic.gc.ca". A navigation bar contains links for "Français", "Home", "Contact Us", "Help", "Search", and "canada.gc.ca". The breadcrumb trail reads "Home > CPD > Basic Search > Search Results > Patent Summary".

The main content area is titled "Canadian Patents Database" and includes a link for "Third-party information liability" and a "Link to this page". The "Patent Summary" section displays the following information:

(12) Patent:	(11) CA 234336
(54) English Title:	EXTRACT OBTAINABLE FROM THE MAMMALIAN PANCREAS OR FROM RELATED GLANDS OF FISHES
(54) French Title:	EXTRAIT DE PANCREAS OU AUTRES GLANDES DE POISSONS MAMMIFERES

Below the summary, there are links for "Patent Details", "View or Download Images", "View Administrative Status", and "Show all claims". On the left side, there is a vertical menu with options like "Industry Canada", "CIPO", "About Us", "Home", "Patents Main Page", "Canadian Patents Database", "Canadian Patents Database Main Page", "Green Technologies", "Search Options", "Basic", "Number", "Boolean", "Advanced", "Help", "General Content", and "Searching".



- Metadata issues

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Patent Details		Top of Page
(52) Canadian Patent Classification (CPC):		167/103.41
(51) International Patent Classification (IPC):		A61K 38/28 (2006.01)
(72) Inventors (Country):		FREDERICK G. BANTING (Country Unknown) CHARLES HERBERT BEST (Country Unknown)
(73) Owners (Country):		THE GOVERNORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO (Afghanistan)
(71) Applicants (Country):		
(74) Agent:		NA
(45) Issued:		1923-09-18
(22) Filed Date:		
(30) Availability of licence:		N/A
(30) Language of filing:		English



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Description	Description	279	5
Drawings	Drawings	12	1
Representative Drawing	Representative Drawing	N/A	N/A

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- Missing/Incomplete documents?

01/8/26

SUBSTITUTE

REPLACEMENT

SECTION is not Present

Cette Section est Absente

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Intended Users

- Patent professionals?
 - Specialised terminology
- General public?
 - Help section, glossary



Transformative Effects on Patent Documents

- Historical documents placed in contemporary context
- No historical information on patents
- Loss of document's social context of creation



Patents and Genre Analysis

- Captures social aspects
- “Identity” and “community”: expanded notions of document creators



Questions?

THANK YOU!

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