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CUSTOMER NUMBER

PROVISIONAL
P A T E N T A P P L I C A T I O N

OF

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FOR

U N I T E D S T A T E S P A T E N T

ON

ONLINE PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION FILING SYSTEM

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ONLINE PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION FILING SYSTEM

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] This invention relates to a web-based provisional patent application filing system.

BACKGROUND

[0002] With the passing of the America Invents Act, the U.S. has changed to a first-to-file system. The shift has caused concern for inventors who now feel an increased pressure to file patent applications as early as possible to preserve their rights. Quickly filing a provisional application may result in incomplete or inadequate disclosure. In some instances, after filing a first provisional application, additional features may be developed and a second provisional may be required for the new features. Filing multiple provisional applications with a law firm can become extremely costly, especially for a small entity inventor.

[0003] Although an inventor can file an application on his or her own behalf, the inventor may not know the level of detail required for an adequate disclosure. In addition, the inventor may not know what additional forms need to be filled out. Although resources are available to teach inventors the patent filing process, most inventors are not interested or do not have time to read these resources.

[0004] Therefore, there is a need for an online system that inventors can access from anywhere that will guide inventors in writing and filing their own provisional patent application in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

SUMMARY

[0005] The present invention is directed to a system and guided process that allows an inventor to file a provisional application online with the United States Patent and Trademark Office. The inventor needs only to follow the step-by-step process without the need to fill out any other forms. Because much of the system is automated, the inventor saves cost for not having to consult with a patent attorney.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0006] Figure 1 shows a screenshot of an embodiment a home page of the present invention;

[0007] Figures 2A-2B show screenshots of embodiments of portions of the invention description page of the present invention;

[0008] Figure 3 shows a screenshot after the learn more link has been actuated;

[0009] Figure 4 shows a screenshot of an embodiment of the invention description page when requested information has not been entered;

[0010] Figure 5 shows a screenshot of an embodiment of the patentability search page;

[0011] Figures 6A shows a screenshot of an embodiment of the patent information page; and

[0012] Figure 6B shows another screenshot of an embodiment of the patent information page with a different step highlighted.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] The detailed description set forth below in connection with the appended drawings is intended as a description of presently-preferred embodiments of the invention and is not intended to represent the only forms in which the present invention may be constructed or utilized. The description sets forth the functions and the sequence of steps for constructing and operating the invention in connection with the illustrated embodiments. It is to be understood, however, that the same or equivalent functions and sequences may be accomplished by different embodiments that are also intended to be encompassed within the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0014] The online patent filing system is a website that guides inventors in filing a provisional patent application. The website comprises a home page **100** containing links that, when actuated, allow the user to navigate to various pages on the website, including, but not limited to, a filing page **200**, a search page **500**, an information page **600**, and a blog page. Other standard webpages found on most websites may also be provided, such as a frequently asked questions page, an about us page, a terms and conditions page, a registration page, a sign in page, and the like. The links may be presented in the form of an icon or words.

[0015] If a file link **102** is actuated, in the preferred embodiment, an invention description page **200** is displayed with fillable fields to input information regarding the user's invention. For example, there may be a title field **202** with a title field prompt **204** to input the title of the invention. There may be a description field **206** with a description field prompt **208** to input a detailed description of the invention. In some embodiments,

the description field **206** may be comprised of multiple fields **206**, **206a** with multiple description field prompts **208**, **208a** to help guide the inventor in providing the proper information for a patent application.

[0016] Oftentimes an inventor may not know what type of information would be required for a patent application. The prompts **208**, **208a** can be in the form of a question, the answer to which would provide the information for the description of the invention. For example, the prompt may ask such broad questions regarding what the invention is, what components make up the invention, how each component works, how each component relates to each other, how to make the invention, how to use the invention, and the like.

[0017] In some embodiments, a series of questions may be asked. In some embodiments, when a series of questions are asked, each subsequent question may be dependent on the immediately prior question asked. In other words, how the inventor answers one question may determine what the next question will be.

[0018] In some embodiments, learn more links **210a-d** may be provided. Actuating any learn more link **210a-d** opens a new window, a pop-up window, a lightbox, or the like with guidance or information as to how to write the section of the application that the inventor is inquiring about. For example, actuation of the learn more link **210a-d** may display in a new window or lightbox **300** with information regarding the law, statute, regulations, rules, step-by-step guidance, and/or examples of the type of information requested.

[0019] In some embodiments, the description field prompts **208**, **208a** may be dependent on the information provided by the user (guided inquiry). By way of example

only, a guided inquiry may begin with asking whether the invention is an apparatus, a process for making, using, or doing something, or a composition. If the user answers that the invention is an apparatus, then the next prompt may request the user to name the major parts of the invention. In some embodiments, the prompt may inquire as to how many major parts there are to the invention. Based on the number of major parts indicated by the inventor, the same number of fillable fields may be displayed for which the inventor can provide additional descriptions for each component.

[0020] After each major part has been identified, the prompt may request that the user describe the purpose, function, and/or utility of each major part. In some embodiments, the prompt may also ask the user to describe the characteristics, properties, and/or other details of each major part that permit the major part to perform its function.

[0021] Once the purpose, function, and/or utility of each major part has been described, a prompt may ask the user how each major part relates to, interacts with, or cooperates with the other major parts.

[0022] After all the major parts have been identified, defined, and their relationships to other major parts described, the user may be asked if there are subparts. If there are subparts, the user can be prompted to identify each subpart, describe their function, purpose, and/or utility, and described the relationship of each subpart to any other relevant subpart or major part, as above.

[0023] Once a description of the preferred embodiment for each of the major parts and subparts has been fully described, the user may be prompted to describe alternative embodiments for each major part and/or subpart. For example, the prompt may ask the

user to provide alternative or substitute components that can replace each major part and/or subpart. Besides alternatives for substitutes, the user may be asked what category of structures each major part and/or subpart belongs to.

[0024] The user may then be asked how to make and use the apparatus in such a way that a person of ordinary skill in the art reading the application would know how to make and use the invention.

[0025] Once all of the descriptive information has been submitted by the user, the system can use the information to automatically compile the provisional application in an organized fashion.

[0026] In some embodiments, an upload feature **212** may be provided so that the inventor can simply upload a file containing the written description of the invention that the inventor may have prepared earlier. Although any file type can be uploaded, files prepared in a word processing program would be preferable so as not to compromise the resolution of the document. PDF files and image files can also be used, but there is a risk that the resolution of these files could be so poor as to be illegible. To account for this, prior to submission of the application, the inventor may have an opportunity to review the document being filed prior to actual submission.

[0027] The upload feature **212** can also be used to upload the description of the invention and/or drawings pertaining to the invention prepared in a different file format, such as a word processing document, PDF document, or an image file. In anticipation of potential drawings being uploaded, the description field may have a prompt inquiring as to the number of figures the inventor intends on filing. Based on the answer, the appropriate

number of fields may be provided asking the inventor to provide a brief description of each figure. Alternatively, a general prompt may be provided asking the inventor to describe each figure the inventor intends on uploading. A learn more link may be provided to show the inventor the format and the extent of the description required for a brief description of the figure. An "add additional file" feature **214** may be provided to upload more files and a "remove file" feature may be provided to delete uploaded files.

[0028] An inventor information section **218** may also be provided on the invention description page. Alternatively, the inventor information may be provided on a separate inventor information page. The inventor information section **218** provides prompts **222** and associated fields **224** for the inventor to input the inventor's contact information, such as name and address. An add inventor feature **226** may be provided in the event there are multiple inventors.

[0029] A correspondence section **220** may also be provided on the invention description page, the inventor information page, or on a separate correspondence information page. An option may be provided to indicate that the correspondence information is the same as the inventor information.

[0030] A miscellaneous information section **228** may be provided on any of the previous pages or on a separate page inquiring about various miscellaneous information that may be important for the patent filing. For example, the inventor may be asked if the invention has been contracted with any U.S. government agency. The inventor may be asked if he is part of a company employing more than 500 people to determine whether he is a large entity for filing fee purposes. If not, other questions may be asked to determine

if the inventor qualifies as a small or micro entity for filing fee purposes.

[0031] Prior to submitting any information provided by the inventor, the inventor may be presented with a terms and agreement prompt **230** to indicate that he agrees with the terms and conditions of using the system.

[0032] Once all the information requested by the system has been provided, the inventor may move onto the next step by clicking a continuation link **232**. Certain fields may be designated as being required information. If the inventor clicks on a continuation link **232** without providing information that has been designated as being required, the system will not move onto the next step. In some embodiments, a notation **400** or pop-up will be displayed adjacent to the field for which required information has not been provided to indicate that information in those fields is required. In some embodiments, the inventor will be automatically taken to the section requiring additional information.

[0033] Once all the required information has been provided, actuation of the continuation link (Next Step) **232** will take the user to transaction page **400** where the user can provide payment information to pay for the filing system. For example, the user can submit his billing information and credit card information, or the user can elect to use a third-party vendor payment, such as PayPal®.

[0034] If a search link **104** is selected, a search page **500** may be displayed to allow the inventor to conduct the search for patents and patent applications that are related to the inventor's invention. A search field **502** may be provided to allow the inventor to input a description of this invention to conduct a search. The search can be conducted on any search engine such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, and the like. Additional information **504** may

be provided describing the search process, how to do a search, what the search is for, and the like.

[0035] If the information link **106** is selected, an information page **600** may be displayed providing the inventor with general information regarding the patent process. Most people learn best by visualization. Therefore, in the preferred embodiment, a flow diagram **602** may be provided to show the patent process. Various symbols such as squares, boxes, diamonds, and the like may be used to designate each step with lines, arrows, or arrowheads connecting each step with another step to show the flow of the patent process. Each step may be embedded with a link, actuation of which displays more detailed information **604** about that step. In the preferred embodiment, the flow diagram **602** is always shown with the detailed information **604** so that the inventor knows where he is in the overall process while learning about a specific step. The step of the process being described may also be highlighted so that the inventor knows what step of the process the detailed information is describing.

[0036] In the preferred embodiment, the detailed information **604** may be displayed adjacent to the flow diagram **602**. In some embodiments, the detailed information **604** may be provided on a separate page, window, lightbox, and the like.

[0037] Additional webpages typical of websites may also be provided, for example, a frequently asked questions page, an about us page, a blog page, and the like. Links for each of these pages can be provided on the home page **100** and any other web page on the website.

[0038] In use, the user actuates the file link **102** from any webpage on the system,

which takes the inventor to the filing page **200**. The user inputs all the required information as indicated and uploads any files desired, clicks on the continuation link **232**, agrees to the terms and conditions, and proceeds to the financial transaction page where he can input his mode of payment and related information.

[0039] Once payment has been accepted, the inventor may have one final opportunity to review the documents submitted. If all is well, the inventor can indicate a final confirmation at which point the application is submitted to the system for further processing and filing with the patent office through the system.

[0040] Once the application has been filed, follow up communications from the system to the client is provided. Follow up communication may include a copy of the application as filed, filing receipt with the application number and filing date, and the like. Additional follow up information may also be provided to help the inventor take his invention to market, including but not limited to non-disclosure agreements, licensing the invention, other intellectual property, such as copyrights and trademarks, reminders for deadlines, and the like.

[0041] The foregoing description of the preferred embodiment of the invention has been presented for the purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed. Many modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teaching. It is intended that the scope of the invention not be limited by this detailed description, but by the claims and the equivalents to the claims appended hereto.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system and method for filing provisional patent applications online.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An online provisional patent application filing system that guides an inventor through the process of writing and filing a provisional application. Follow ups are also provided to inform the client of additional information that may be helpful in taking his invention to market.