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Dot Asia Land Rush Expected

In October of 2006, ICANN announced the launch of a new regional ccTLD, .asia, intended to service entities and individuals with a presence in the 73 countries defined as being part of the Asia/Australia/Pacific region and expected to be very attractive to those doing business in the region. Registrations of the .asia domain name will most likely be rolled out on a "Sunrise" basis, somewhat similar to the procedure employed for the .eu domain. A draft of the rules has been released, with the final version expected sometime in March of 2007. The first sunrise period will be reserved for government entities, and the second will give trademark owners priority to register domains using their trademarks. Unlike the .eu registration process that had no "cut-off" date for recent registrations, leading to a flurry of applicants seeking to register their trademarks before sunrise began in order to be eligible for the first wave, the .asia procedure is expected to first allow trademark owners with "established marks"—those filed on or before March 16, 2004—to submit applications, followed by a period in which owners of a registered mark applied on or before December 6, 2006 will be given the opportunity. Rather than a "first come, first served" policy, conflicting successful applications for the same domain will be auctioned to the highest bidder, as it is thought that those applicants willing to pay a higher price will be more likely to actually use the domain.

IP Australia Pitches In to Help USPTO

In its continuing effort to reduce the growing backlog of pending U.S. patent applications, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) has extended its pilot project with IP Australia, whereby IP Australia will continue to provide search and examination services on international patent applications filed with the USPTO under provisions of the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). In the next year of the project, starting March 12, 2007, IP Australia will process up to 1,200 PCT applications, covering a range of technologies. The USPTO receives about 50,000 international PCT applications annually.

The USPTO will review the work of IP Australia to ensure that it meets USPTO standards for quality and accuracy. IP Australia's Director General Ian Heath explained some of the benefits IP Australia will receive from the project, including moving closer to the vision of being an office of choice and for enhancing the international reputation of IP Australia.

Digital Fingerprints on the iTunes

Gracenote digital fingerprint technology has exposed what appears to be a major case of musical plagiarism when it identified a recording of Liszt's 12 "Transcendental Études" attributed to late pianist Joyce Hatto as the work of a different artist. Further investigation confirmed the recordings were identical, and when other Hatto recordings came under scrutiny, many more were found to have been originally recorded by other artists. Some tracks had been tempered with, possibly to disguise their origin. In one instance the tempo was reduced by 15.112% to alter the tone. William Barrington-Coupe who runs Concert Artist label responsible for publishing the infringing works has initially denied any wrongdoing, saying the sound waves prove nothing. Sound engineers disagree, noting that even similar performances by the same artist hold detectable differences—variables such as the timber of the room, the type and placement of microphones and the noise inherent in the recording system make each recording unique. It remains to be seen whether major labels whose copyrights were violated will choose to pursue the matter in court.