U.S. launches open-software patent program

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The federal government is forging closer ties with open-source software architects in order to make the patent process less vulnerable to lawsuits.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office said Tuesday it had created a partnership with the open-source community that will make sure patent examiners have access to a complete list of previous innovations, which are referred to as "art" in the patent business.

The program's goal is to reduce confusion among software developers and patent officials and head off costly and time-consuming litigation over patents.

Some analysts questioned the effectiveness of the plan. One expert told The New York Times that the Patent Office has already been somewhat overwhelmed by new technical information.

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