INTA—
125 Years of Excellence
EVOLUTION/REVOLUTION:
A HISTORY OF
THE BULLETIN

By Diane Donnelly

Today’s bi-weekly INTA Bulletin, with its eye-catching format and photos and variety of articles, may seem a venerable institution to new members of the International Trademark Association (INTA). But long-term INTA members will recall the Bulletin’s evolution from its sporadic, blue-paged beginnings to its recent incarnation as an award-winning publication. And for those INTA veterans who have experienced the growing pains of the Bulletin, its metamorphosis is a particular joy. Having served on the Bulletin from fledgling reporter to Editor-in-Chief, I was delighted by the prospect of sniffing out its origins. In tracing this history, I discovered revolution as well as evolution.

My search initially turned up some dusty, yellowed volumes in my firm’s library where I encountered a red herring. The Bulletin’s saga may appear to have begun in 1887 when the Association introduced a monthly periodical called “The Bulletin of the United States Trade-Mark Association” which contained articles, editorial notes and commentary on current trademark issues in the United States and abroad. But this was a false lead. A review of these early Bulletins disclosed that they were the predecessor of The Trademark Reporter®, not today’s Bulletin. In fact, in 1941, this early Bulletin merged with a sister USTA periodical to form a single publication entitled “The Trade-Mark Reporter and The Bulletin of the United States Trade-Mark Association.”

No, the origins of today’s Bulletin were to be found elsewhere. It appears that in about 1946 the Association began issuing, sporadically, an informal newsletter called the Bulletin. These Bulletins contained no scholarly, footnoted articles, but rather


1. See also Miles J. Alexander and Daniel R. Bereskin, History of The Trademark Reporter®, supra at 52.
consisted of punchy, to-the-point reports: a page or two of typewritten copy focusing on a topical trademark issue.

Regrettably, the early issues are lost. The first issue in INTA's archives is dated January 29, 1953, and featured a report by Walter J. Derenberg, Chair of the International Committee. Entitled, "Important Changes in the Trade-Mark Rules Concerning German, Japanese, Bulgarian, Hungarian and Rumanian Trade-Marks," it dealt with the relaxed restrictions of the U.S. Office of Alien Property regarding trademark transactions by those nationals. This interesting bit of post-World War II/Cold War history reflected the impact of catastrophic world events on our world of trademarks.

A review of subsequent issues established that the origins of today's Bulletin emerged from the USTA's International Committee. Though some reports were written by staff, the majority of the Bulletins were issued under the bylines of that Committee's various Chairs. Over the years, the USTA Bulletin developed from a Committee Chair's report into a solid newsletter that was clearly a group effort. By 1977, the various Subcommittee Chairs were credited in the Bulletin: South and Latin America, Africa and Middle East, Canada, Asia, Western Europe/Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (Soviet Bloc).

Although the masthead of the Bulletin changed over the years, the format consisted of no-nonsense typewritten copy on plain blue sheets. In 1985, the page color changed to white, but the straightforward format remained the same.

As the International Committee expanded in importance in the USTA, so did the scope of the Bulletin. By 1988, Special Focus Bulletins were introduced and during the next few years covered such topics as the Madrid Protocol, geographical indications, GATT, counterfeiting, and parallel imports.

The Bulletin was steadily evolving. But by the late 1980s the rumble of revolution was in the air. As the Association moved toward internationalization, the Planning Committee took a hard look at the International Committee and decided it should be tasked with more than a reporting function. Its mission should be not only to report the news, but to make the news as well. The new vision of the International Committee was that of a proactive, dynamic group of people who would analyze issues, propose policies and influence governments in the development of trademark law. These developments would be reported in a timely, accurate and comprehensive manner through the Bulletin.

To make that vision real, the Committee was restructured into two groups: the proactive Task Forces, each with their own special mission; and the Reporting/Editorial Group. The latter was charged with the formidable task of creating a new, energized Bulletin: a reliable, professional publication that would rival and
surpass the for-profit trademark publications in timeliness and accuracy.

This was a bold and challenging vision. Suddenly, the International Committee expanded to more than 350 members, half of whom were assigned to the Reporting/Editorial Group. What to do with all these members? Obviously, they had to be organized, and organized well, if they were to be productive.

The Group was structured like a pyramid with its bottom layer being our worldwide reporting network consisting of reporters from different countries of the world. The reporters were grouped into geographical areas, each headed by a Regional Editor. The Regional Editors reported to an Editorial Board consisting of three International Editors. At the peak of the pyramid was the Editor-in-Chief, the Chair of the International Editorial Board. The items for the International Bulletin—initially composed by the reporters, many of whom were writing English as a second language—were edited up through this pyramid, at last emerging as Bulletin-worthy copy.

In 1991, Clark Lackert was appointed the Editor-in-Chief of this newly-created International Editorial Board, and I served as an International Editor. I remember that first year the Editorial Board struggled to rein in the resources from our scores of reporters throughout the world in an orderly, methodical manner. We had monthly meetings in Clark’s office in which we mulled over administrative problems and came up with tentative solutions. We placed the reporters on a monthly reporting cycle. We recruited reporters for key countries in which we had no coverage. We instituted a strict verification policy, under which every item had to be verified by a second source. We shifted the geographical areas headed by Regional Editors to ensure a fairer distribution of work. We began giving workshops at the annual meetings to teach our fledgling reporters how to write Bulletin items, and then we reworked the workshops, trying to make them less stuffy and more effective. We issued guidelines and checklists. We even perfected a “deadbeat” letter in which we politely told non-performers that their services were no longer required.

Slowly but surely we honed the Bulletin into shape, very often from trial-by-error. We set up a complex structure and when something didn’t work, we dumped it and tried a different approach. This flexibility allowed the Bulletin to continually evolve. We learned the hard way that we had to emulate a tenacious yet pliable tree: set down strong roots but still bend and sway in the wind. Happily, by the time I became Editor-in-Chief in 1993, the Bulletin’s production was swaying to a steady beat. We were issuing Bulletins on a monthly basis and identifying each item with a Source, Verifier and Editor.
Then the beat changed. When the USTA took its giant step forward and emerged as INTA in 1993, it decided to publish a consolidated INTA Bulletin which would combine the news items of the former International Bulletin (to be called Law & Practice) with other Association news and articles. New features such as “In the News” and “Point of View” were introduced. At first these additional articles were written by the INTA staff. By 1996, the Bulletin Editorial Board was again restructured to accommodate the expanding role the Committee members would play in the new consolidated Bulletin. Besides contributing to the Law & Practice Section, Committee members would prepare articles on general news and Association news, and contribute items to the “In the News” and “Point of View” sections. New features such as “Committee Comments” were added. Members would also work on Special Bulletin Reports and Supplements. In addition, the members would be critiquing the Bulletin and making recommendations on how to enhance its style as well as content.

Besides the Editor-in-Chief, there were now three Executive Editors: Law & Practice, Features, and Supplements and Development.

The Editorial Board set as its primary goals:

- timely and accurate reporting of international trademark law and related developments;
- reporting of Association news to alert members to INTA actions and activities; and
- helping to humanize INTA by focusing on INTA leaders and members as well as staff.

An unwritten, but essential, goal was to prevent the Bulletin from turning into a chatty high-school newspaper: we wanted sparkle, but no fluff. A slogan was added to our masthead that reflected our vision of the Bulletin: The Voice of the International Trademark Association.

In 1997, the Editorial Board was faced with a grueling challenge: to publish the INTA Bulletin bi-weekly. By then we had been issuing Bulletins every three weeks; but the prospect of a twice-monthly publication seemed daunting. Happily, with the perseverance of dedicated staff members and the wholehearted cooperation of the Committee members, we met the challenge. The INTA Bulletin has steadily issued twice a month for several years.

The Bulletin continues to grow. Since September 2001, the Bulletin has been posted on INTA’s Members Only website. Electronic delivery is now available to members upon request. Bulletin issues since January 2000 have been archived and are searchable by issue, keyword, subsection or article title. New features have been introduced: “Member Spotlight,” “Behind the
Scenes,” “World Update,” “Brand Buys,” “Mark of the Month” and the “INTA Bulletin Board.” Recent Special Reports have focused on such diverse subjects as the European Court of Justice, China and domain names. The current Editorial Board, with Olga Nedeltscheff at the helm as Editor-in-Chief, has expanded to include an Associate Editor and five Executive Editors, along with the staff Managing Editor and Assistant Editor.

From its inception more than fifty years ago, the Bulletin has, through evolution and revolution, matured into a professional bi-weekly periodical. In 1995, the Association Trends’ Annual Competition for Excellence in Association Publications saluted the INTA Bulletin for its quality and creativity. And in 2001, Communications Concepts granted the INTA Bulletin an Award of Excellence for the Most Improved Newsletter. The INTA Bulletin continues to bend and sway through the winds of a new century. The beat goes on.
THE BULLETIN THROUGH THE YEARS