

## Traditional Knowledge Digital Library

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[A Roundtable](#) on *Building Community Capacity: a Roundtable on Practical Initiatives on Intellectual Property and Traditional Cultural Expressions, Traditional Knowledge and Genetic Resources* will take place at the headquarters of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva, from December 10 to 12, 2007.

The Roundtable is an informal, practically-oriented event. It responds to the strong level of interest expressed by many national authorities and community representatives in sharing experience and developing dialogue and cooperation on practical initiatives to build capacity for the appropriate protection of intellectual property and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs), traditional knowledge (TK) and genetic resources (GR).

The Roundtable follows in the tradition of community consultation that has been part of WIPO's program in this domain since its inception with the first fact-finding consultations dating back to 1998 and 1999.

One of the first such projects, the [Traditional Knowledge Digital Library](#), is being compiled by hundreds of doctors in India with the help of software engineers and patent examiners, an encyclopedia of the country's traditional medicine in five languages - English, French, German, Japanese and Spanish - in an effort to stop people from claiming them as their own novel inventions and patenting them.

The [BBC reported](#) on this a couple of years ago.

Indian scientists say the country has been a victim of what they describe as "bio-piracy" for a long time.

"When we put out this encyclopaedia in the public domain, no one will be able to claim that these medicines or therapies are their inventions. Till now, we have not done the needful to protect our traditional wealth," says Ajay Dua, a senior bureaucrat in the federal commerce ministry.

Putting together the encyclopaedia is a daunting task.

For one, ayurvedic texts are in Sanskrit and Hindi, unani texts are in Arabic and Persian and siddha material is in Tamil language. Material from these texts is being translated into five international languages, using sophisticated software coding.

The sheer wealth of material that has to be read through for information is enormous - there are some 54 authoritative 'text books' on ayurveda alone, some thousands of years old.

## Traditional Knowledge Digital Library : Securing Innovation

People outside India are not aware of our immense traditional knowledge wealth

Then there are nearly 150,000 recorded ayurvedic, unani and siddha medicines; and some 1,500 asanas (physical exercises and postures) in yoga, which originated in India more than 5,000 years ago.

Under normal circumstances, a patent application should always be rejected if there is prior existing knowledge about the product.

But in most of the developed nations like United States, "prior existing knowledge" is only recognised if it is published in a journal or is available on a database - not if it has been passed down through generations of oral and folk traditions.

The irony here is that India has suffered even though its traditional knowledge, as in China, has been documented extensively.

But information about traditional medicine has never been culled from their texts, translated and put out in the public domain.

PBS Online NewsHour reported on the story again this year, interviewing [V.K. Gupta](#) Director, [Traditional Knowledge Digital Library](#), and posted the audio with a transcript of the program [here](#).

If readers have more information about this ambitious defensive publication, or any like it being undertaken in China or other countries with indigenous medicinal knowledge, we'd be interested if you might take a few minutes and leave comments about this at the link below.

Tags: [Defensive Publishing](#), [India](#), [WIPO](#), [traditional knowledge](#)