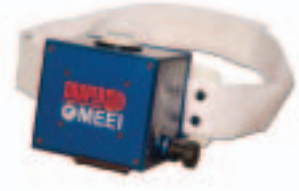


Patents Introduction

Draper Laboratory's trademark is its ability to integrate widely diverse technical capabilities into innovative and creative solutions for problems of national importance. Draper scientists and engineers are encouraged in their quest to advance the application of science and technology, expand the functions of existing technologies, and to create new ones.



The disclosure of inventions is an important step in documenting these creative efforts and is required under Laboratory contracts (and by an agreement with Draper that all employees sign). Draper has an established patent policy and understands the value of patents in directing attention to effective individual accomplishments. Pursuing patent protection enables the Laboratory to pursue its strategic mission and recognizes its employees' valuable contributions to advancing the state-of-the-art in their technical areas. An issued patent is also recognition by a critical third party (the U.S. Patent Office) of novel and creative work for which the inventor should be justly proud.

On average, Draper's Patent Committee typically recommends seeking patent protection for 50 percent of the disclosures received. Millions of U.S. patents have been issued since the first patent in 1836. Through December 31, 2003, 1185 Draper patent disclosures have been submitted to the Patent Committee since 1973; 611 of which were approved by Draper's Patent Committee for further patent action. As of December 31, a total of 443 patents have been granted for inventions made by Draper personnel. Nineteen patents were issued for calendar year 2003.

This year's featured patent is:

Balance Prosthesis

The following pages contain an overview of the technology covered in the patent, followed by the official patent abstract issued by the U.S. Patent Office.

Megan Owens wears the six-degree-of-freedom balance system to illustrate the module's patient interface. With this module and a tactor vest, patients with inner ear balance disorders receive rapid positional feedback, helping them to regain balance and avoid falls.

