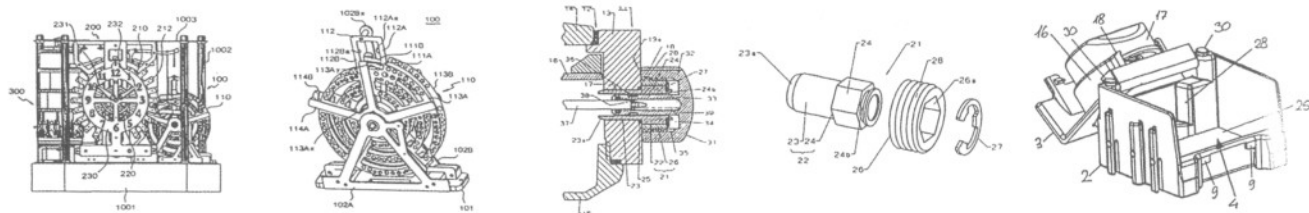


# Centredoc's Time Watch

*Do you want to know how many patents have been filed in the last few years relating to the grand date? And, who has filed them? Do you want to know the state of research for water-resistance in crowns? Do you want to be alerted when someone files a patent in the area of innovative displays?*

*For these and other questions, there is one and only one address: Centredoc. But, what exactly is Centredoc?*

## ›Pierre Maillard



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Created in 1964 on the initiative of Swiss watch companies, Centredoc, situated in Neuchâtel, is as its name indicates the Centre for Technical Information for the Watch Industry. From a legal point of view, it is a "cooperative" that belongs to watch manufacturers as well as various university institutes or research centres dealing with micro-techniques.

Its general mission is to be a purveyor of information. Centredoc is therefore a technical watchdog in the domains of science, technology and economics. Beyond the watchdog aspect of its mandate, however, the Centre also offers a complete range of information-search services in these domains. Little by little, its mission has expanded to include materials in the realm of micro-techniques and radio frequency identification (called RFID), but the essential nature of its activities remains oriented towards the watch sector. Its employees form the basis of its competence. They include PhDs in chemistry and physics, engineers, science graduates, specialists in micro-mechanics, and even economists, all working under the direction of Bernard Chapuis. This palette of proficiencies

thus allows Centredoc to offer a wide range of unparalleled services in the watch universe.

## Review of Watch Inventions

Did you know, for example, that about 50 to 80 new patents are filed or applied for each month in the watchmaking sector? Centredoc's watchdog activity in the realm of patents and patent applications is one of the keystones of the centre. It publishes them, either in the form of card summaries, or in their entirety on its internet website. Grouped together under the name "Review of Watch Inventions," this activity is complemented by "Kookai", which publishes watch patent filings in Japan. Together, they represent quite an exceptional data base, which allows watch companies affiliated with Centredoc to get a precise idea of the "state of the art" in any given field.

Is an idea really innovative? Is it copyright free? Who has already begun working in this domain? And, when? With what results? What is the legal status of any given patent? What are its geographical boundaries or limitations? The "Review of Watch Inventions" is thus a formidable tool in research and a precious source for inspiration.

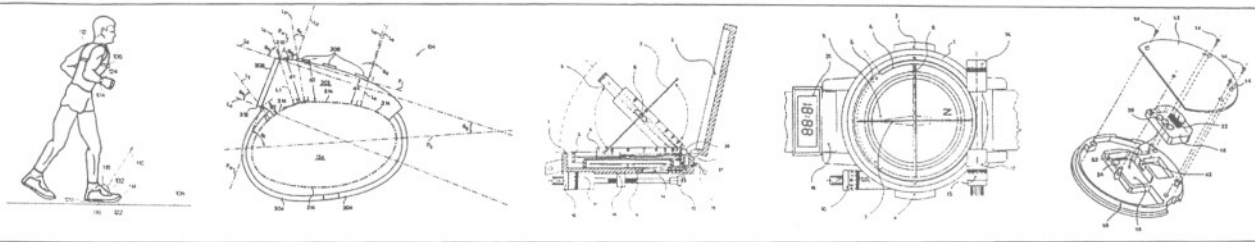
"Each new application for a patent is included in a descriptive sheet," explains Bernard Chapuis, "which, in a few lines, sums

up the essential nature of its contents, indicates its advantages, and is illustrated by technical drawings. Since we introduced this information in a complete form on the internet, we have noticed an increase in our subscriptions of about 15 percent." However, this increase is also due to the current climate. "The determination by manufacturers to achieve technological independence as well as the arrival of new players onto the watch scene has provided new momentum to the research and development sector," adds Chapuis.

## Trends and patents

As in all other domains, we note that current trends have not spared the patent arena, quite the contrary. A typical example is seen in the research being conducted on the grand date systems, research which has multiplied recently. Another fashionable domain relates to investigations into new materials. A close examination of pending and granted patents allows us to get a fairly clear picture of the state of the watch landscape. In this area only, the documentation provided by Centredoc is a source of totally precise and exacting information.

The surveillance of evolutions in technology, made possible notably because of the RAPID system (short for Remotely Accessible Patent



Information Database), allows decision makers in the watch industry to better use the mass of information provided by the patents in ways that it relates to their own product strategies. For investors, this information allows them to better identify and follow the highest performing companies. Also, this watchdog activity allows advisors to be better warned about counterfeiting.

### Advice and training

Centredoc has extended its observational activities into advice and training. It helps

enterprises put into place their own systems of technological surveillance in the domains they are interested in, and it contributes to training those who are in charge of these areas.

In the more specific field of materials (INFO-MAT), Centredoc provides a wide range of services. Drawing on the analyses of trade publications from around the world, on the scrutiny of large databases, on information coming from international congresses, and on a network of experts and specialists, Centredoc provides key information on the latest devel-

opments in the area of materials and their technologies. It publishes regular bulletins and organizes technical seminars. As an example of the latter, some of the themes are "Emerging Materials, Advanced Materials", "Assembly in micro-techniques", "Precision Cleaning, Illusions and Realities", etc.

For more information on Centredoc and the conditions required for affiliation, visit [www.centredoc.ch](http://www.centredoc.ch). <

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